RECEPTION OF CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY IN WOODY ALLEN'S DRAMAS: *CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS*, *MATCH POINT*, AND *CASSANDRA'S DREAM*

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis explores the reception of classical mythology in three dramas by Woody Allen: *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989), *Match Point* (2005), and *Cassandra's Dream* (2007). These films are studied as contemporary interpretations of the ancient stories of Oedipus, Narcissus, and Orestes. Allen's films use mythic patterns to meditate on such ancient themes as illusion versus reality, status, alienation and self-identity, the tragedy of love, human conscience, moral choice and responsibility, fate and revenge, crime and punishment. The purpose of this study is to show how Woody Allen's dramas originate from ancient mythology and how the study of Greek tragedy and Roman poetry sheds light on the problems centered in his movies, which are neglected by most critics. The comparative study of Allen's dramas in the context of classical mythology is based on a dialogic relation between ancient and modern narratives proposed by Vladimir Bibler. In this dialogue, every work of art contributes to the deeper understanding of one another. The interpretation of film and text in this thesis is based on close reading analysis. The study of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* in the context of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* discovers the film as an intertext and a metatext concerned with art's capacities for representation of reality. The study of *Match Point* in the context of Ovid's *Narcissus* reveals the problem of self-identification as a significant dimension of both narratives. A comparative analysis of *Cassandra's Dream* and Aeschylus's *The Oresteia* results in the insight about the film's title and main conflict. Eventually, the study provides an example of a dialogic approach to comparative literature in practice.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What's past is prologue.

--William Shakespeare

In this thesis, I explore the method and purpose of the reception of classical myth in three dramas by Woody Allen: *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989), *Match Point* (2005), and *Cassandra's Dream* (2007). These films can be considered contemporary interpretations of the ancient stories of Oedipus, Narcissus, and Orestes. I argue that the director references these classical myths to question contemporary values and problems. Allen's films use mythic patterns to meditate on such ancient themes as illusion versus reality, status, alienation and self-identity, the fatality of love, human conscience, moral choice and responsibility, fate and revenge, crime and punishment. The purpose of this study is to show how Woody Allen's dramas originate from ancient mythology and how Greek tragedy and Roman poetry shed light on the director's vision of problems in contemporary civilization.

Inclusion of the classical themes in the modern context provokes a dialogic relation between classical and modern eras, artists, and narratives. In my vision, the reception of antiquity in a contemporary time represents a dialogue between the two cultures. In this dialogue, every piece of art, referenced or which is making a reference to,

contributes to the deeper interpretation of one another, as though they are written to reference and help to understand each other. According to this paradigm, Pasolini's *Oedipus Rex*, for example, reveals new dimensions of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* due to its new reading and interpretation allowed by the contemporary artistic vision, style, and medium. The same is true about the opposite relation since reading Sophocles could be a proper guide to the depth and nuances of the movie. The dialogue approach to cultural studies I employ in my research was formulated by Russian philosopher and culture expert, Vladimir Bibler, in his essay "Dialogue of cultures."[1] Bibler develops the idea of dialogue of various voices in the text proposed by his mentor, literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin. Bibler elaborates on this idea and suggests the dialogic method as the framework for the study of the relationship of various cultures.

It is quite fascinating to see as a participant in such a dialogue between ancient and modern cultures an American comedian, writer, film director, and actor, Woody Allen. Through his film career, he has established himself as an intellectual auteur. He demonstrates his erudition and cultural awareness through references to various philosophical and artistic works in his own art. Classical mythology is one of his favorite platforms for a contemporary tale. Allen's films, such as *Mighty Aphrodite* and *Cassandra's Dream,* contain references to ancient myth in their very titles. A number of his other works include classical citations within a plot or dialogue. In such a way, antiquity serves as an inspiration for ideas and themes exploited in Allen's films. My interest is particularly attracted by three Woody Allen's movies infused with a sense of tragedy, untypical for the famous comedy maker. Due to their strong correlation with

[1] With Bibler's article, "Dialogue of Cultures," I am referring to, is his original text written in Russian and printed in Russian magazine. Although this article is an important contribution for cultural studies, its translation into English either does not exist or it is not published.

ancient Greek drama and their exquisite style, these films have become a subject for my research. The protagonists of each of these films, *Crimes and Misdemeanors, Match Point,* and *Cassandra's Dream*, commit a murder, although none of them fit the traditional Hollywood formula of a murderer. They are not experienced criminals but seemingly decent people who are forced to commit a crime in order to get money and status (*Cassandra's Dream*) or to remove obstacles on their way for keeping the money and status they have and for the sake of future prosperity (*Crimes and Misdemeanor*s and *Match Point).* Allen's treatment of crime, punishment, and the fatality theme brings his works into close connection with certain ancient works, which, in turn, represent artistic records of Classical mythology.

I use ancient Greek and Roman texts as a guideline for my film analysis. My method implies looking at the contemporary movie through the lens of Classical mythology. My interpretation of ancient myths in Allen's films will be based on *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles (for *Crimes and Misdemeanors*), *Metamorphoses* by Ovid (for *Match Point*), and *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus and *Orestes* by Euripides (for *Cassandra's Dream*).

The three Woody Allen's dramas I have been working on can be distinguished as crime and punishment stories. Therefore, a typical critic in comparative literature would provide a standard Dostoyevsky/Dreiser reading of the films. It seems so obvious to compare Allen's protagonists, Terry and Ian (*Cassandra's Dream*), to Rodion Raskolnikov (*Crime and Punishment*) who kills with purpose and then repents, or Judah (*Crimes and Misdemeanors*) to Clyde Griffits (*An American Tragedy*) since they both get rid of a mistress for the sake of wealth and status. Finally, Chris (*Match Point*) is

compared to both Raskolnikov (Chris reads *Crime and Punishment* and acquires his theory) and Griffits (Chris kills his pregnant lover). Although these interpretations are obvious (and I shall not deny the assumption that Allen himself was keeping in mind these novels while writing his scripts, and, therefore, their influence might be inevitable), they may have remarkable results. I would not dare to compete with obvious interpretations of Allen's dramas suggested by more experienced and known scholars. Therefore, I am analyzing these films in the context of ancient myth which is less obvious but nonetheless fitting and insightful. My goal is to deviate from a standard reading in order to reveal the new dimensions of the film and refresh the viewer's perception of Allen's auteurism. Thus, the *Oedipus Rex* context allows me to reveal in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* the tension between illusive image and reality as well as a meditation on art's capacities to demonstrate this tension. To make these discoveries about this movie seems hardly possible while watching it in the context of the abovementioned novels. While analyzing *Match Point,* I pay more attention to the theme of self-identity and searching for oneself, which I discovered in *The Story of Narcissus* from *Metamorphoses*, rather than exploiting the theme of crime and punishment along with other critics. In my chapter on *Cassandra's Dream*, I am trying to unravel the riddle of the film's title, which no critic seems to have done yet. It appears that the film has more connections with the ancient myth of Cassandra than just the random and odd word combination. These connections serve as a ground for the film's dialogue with classical tragedies, which I analyze in the context of human conscience and morality.

Along with the dialogic approach to the works of my study, my method includes close reading analysis. The argumentation I pursue to prove my thesis statement about

each film highly relies on the textual and cinematic evidences from both ancient and modern dramas, respectively. I emphasize this moment since many critics from literary studies neglect close reading when they deal with films. This method allows me not only to discover unconventional topics in the movies but also in the ancient texts. For example, myth of Narcissus is usually considered as a story of beauty, selfishness, and Freudian narcissism. My close reading of the way Ovid puts it into his poem, however, shows more depth of its thematic layers. The myth appears to be an allegorical representation of one's quest for his or her self-identity, which is dramatic and at the same time poetic. Paradoxically, this theme of the ancient Roman poem would not seem apparent to me unless I compared it to the 2005 film *Match Point,* which still remains another version of *Crime and Punishment* for many viewers.

The first chapter is focused on *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. I interpret this drama as a reception of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex.* The analysis of the film's references to the Oedipus myth enables me to reveal their common topic – the tension between image and reality. The comparison of Allen's protagonist, Judah, to Oedipus shows that they both are criminals who live in the illusion of their heroic image, in a manner. However, the ancient hero reveals his true identity while the modern one alienates himself from it. If Oedipus sacrifices his image and social position in favor of truth and reality, then Judah sacrifices reality for the sake of his status and keeps living in illusion. My research suggests that Judah seeks to delude his society as well as the film's audience. Therefore, on the surface, he seems decent, although still a murderer. Through Judah's story Allen demonstrates art's capacity to reveal the tension between image and reality. It is due to the fact that the "real" Judah can be shown only by means of art, a film about Judah. The

theme of illusion of image and art's capacities to reveal it unites two seemingly divorced storylines of the film. Clifford's and Lester's stories appear to copy Judah's. Similar to what Allen does in relation to Judah, Clifford tries to reveal the illusiveness of Lester's image in his film. The study of Allen's work through the Oedipus paradigm enables one to watch *Crimes and Misdemeanors* as both an intertext and a metatext focused on art's capacities for the representation of reality.

In the second chapter, I examine mythic themes in *Match Point*. Watching the film in the context of Ovid's *Story of Narcissus* enables one to discover the importance of the self-identification problem examined in both narratives. The study shows a film as a meditation on the complexity of one's searching for self-identity in the contemporary world, which is dominated by misleading values of bourgeois society. Indeed, the film's protagonist, Chris, refuses to accept his identity as a poor and unsuccessful outsider and, instead, aspires to enter the world of the bourgeoisie. Similar to Narcissus who struggles to identify himself, Chris is in search of his own identity. The close film analysis demonstrates that Chris tries several identities and, finally, finds the one which fits him best, but he does not realize this. Similar to Narcissus who falls in love with his own reflection, Chris falls in love with a woman, Nola, who plays the role of his double in the movie. However, Chris rejects this identity in favor of a more desirable one, a member of the upper class. Similar to Narcissus, Chris feels himself as a lucky man. However, the wrong self-identity choice makes him suffer. In order to stop it, Chris, similar to Narcissus, kills Nola, his reflection. This, however, does not make him happy. The bourgeois values of wealth, status, and success are opposed to love and naturalness. As

Match Point suggests, it is only the latter which help humans to find their place under the sun and true happiness.

In the third chapter, I compare the plot and characters of *Cassandra's Dream* to those of the myth of Orestes. The film's protagonists are brothers placed in a critical situation where social circumstances force them to choose between money and moral purity. Just like in the story of Orestes and Electra, one of the characters doubts whether murder is the right decision; the other convinces him to kill. In contrast to the classical myth, Allen exposes the moral suffering and regret of the murderer. The rise of conscience of a contemporary Orestes emerges from his capacity to resist the demands of mainstream culture, such as success and status. Highlighting the ancient theme of the cycle of evil and revenge, Allen demonstrates why crimes cannot be justified. Contemporary murders are punished in the end, revealing the meaning of the film's title. The analysis of Cassandra's story in mythology along with her monologue in Aeschylus's *The Oresteia,* reveals that "Cassandra's dream" may be considered as an inevitable retribution for murder. The ancient "dream" comes true both literally and metaphorically in the modern film. The central question examined by Allen in this work is whether people should stay ethically indifferent even when they realize the meaningless of their existence. Through the words of one of its characters, Terry, the film argues that people always have a choice. The film proposes that people's morality is based, nowadays, on their own decision how to live their life.

CHAPTER 2

OEDIPUS'S INTERVENTION: ILLUSION, REALITY, AND ART IN *CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS*

According to criticism on Allen's films, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989) is one of his most seen and discussed films ever. Since the movie problematizes human morality and questions God's existence, it is usually read as a philosophical fable. *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is compared to such moralized literary works as *Macbeth* (Jolley), *Crime and Punishment* (Nicholas), and *The Great Gatsby* (Vipond). Indeed, these works of art expose characters making moral choices, suffering from pangs of conscience, and being involved in religious discourse. All these features can be traced in the life of Allen's protagonist, Judah. Critical works on *Crimes and Misdemeanors* provide a viewer with different interpretations, and each of them deserves to be taken into account while dealing with such a profound film. The critics discuss it within a theological framework (Lee), as an existential dilemma (McFarland), or as a work with the "spirit of Greek tragedy" (Barbera). But the film's dimensions also go beyond moral issues. My interpretation is focused on the movie's theme of illusion versus reality, which is perfectly conveyed through the art of cinema.

In my reading of the film, I will refer to another literary work as well, specifically, *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles (c. 5 BCE). As Barbera correctly notices, Greek tragedy

seems to inspire Woody Allen a lot (1). The criticism on *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, however, lacks any detailed analysis seen through the lens of ancient tragedy. While approaching the film as a reception of the classical Oedipus myth, I rediscovered its underlying conflict. By use of intertextuality (references to *Oedipus Rex* and other works of art), self-reflexivity (commenting on filmmaking process), and, eventually, metatextuality (film's reference to itself), Allen meditates on the tension between the superficial, illusive image of reality and reality in fact, as well as on the representative capacities of art. The film suggests that art is one of humans' instruments to reveal the illusiveness of an image that otherwise could be taken for granted as straightforward. Ironically, art is an illusion itself and, therefore, can be used for both creating an image and revealing its shallowness. The Oedipus reading allows a viewer to align the two seemingly divorced storylines (Judah's and Clifford's) as those which appear to mirror one another. The connection between these storylines is neglected in critical reviews and studies of the film.

Allen's drama includes several direct and indirect references to the myth of Oedipus. First, one of the film characters, Lester, a successful comedy maker, discusses Oedipus's story as an example of a good comedy for a contemporary audience. Dissatisfied with the jokes suggested by his subordinates, Lester tries to teach them what the real humor consists in: "Think of Oedipus. Oedipus is funny. Who did this terrible thing? 'Oh, God, it was me.' That's funny." Indeed, the situation of Oedipus is ironical. In the play, he is the one who takes the role of a detective but due to his investigation, he appears to be the criminal he has been searching for. Despite this irony, the play has been traditionally considered a tragedy of ignorance. Lester, however, finds it very funny and

considers its comedy to cater to the modern audience's taste. Interestingly, according to Lester, the very ignorance of the fictional character turned into knowledge ought to amuse the audience. In such a way, through mentioning Oedipus in the specific context, Allen gives his audience a hint on the major conflict of his film: knowledge versus ignorance in perception of reality.

Second, the film explores the problem of whether killers can get away with their crimes, which is also explored in *Oedipus Rex*. According to his interview, Allen has been dwelling on the "enormous injustice" of life where people kill others and stay unpunished, for a long time (Whyte 15). A possibility of life burdened with crimes is one of the major ideas discussed in *Oedipus Rex*. The ancient tragedy shows that a criminal is unable to get away with crimes, even with those committed in ignorance. When Oedipus finally realizes his crimes, he identifies himself as a criminal and aptly punishes himself. In *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, Judah Rosenthal orders the murder of his mistress, Dolores, but stays unpunished. Remarkably, in both stories, the possibility of getting away with one's crimes is interconnected with one's ability consciously or unconsciously to delude his surroundings. Indeed, Oedipus gets away with his crimes for twenty years until the problem of a plague emerges. Unlike Oedipus, Judah commits his crime consciously and consciously deludes the people around him. As a result, self-blinded Oedipus has to be exiled from the city while Judah prospers among the social elite who have no idea about the real Judah but only about his image. Again, investigation on this film's reference to the ancient myth allows opening a discussion of the tension between superficial image and reality.

Third, one of the film's characters discusses the Oedipus complex, well-known due to Freudian psychoanalysis. Professor Levy, who appears in the documentary being shot by Clifford, alludes to the Oedipus complex while sharing his thoughts about the paradox of love:

> The paradox consists of the fact that, when we fall in love, we are seeking to re-find all or some of the people to whom we were attached as children**.** On the other hand, we ask our beloved to correct all of the wrongs.

In his monologue, Professor Levy discusses human relations from a Freudian perspective. It was Freud's hypothesis that children copy their parents of the same sex and then, in the future, seek for the people who would remind them their parents of the opposite sex. In order to name this psychological complex, Freud turned towards Classical mythology, the Oedipus myth, specifically. Indeed, the myth externalizes this complex since Oedipus literally does what, according to Freud, the Oedipus complex drives humans to do. The fact that Allen's film references Oedipus within a Freudian reading of the myth calls for reflecting on the image of the ancient character which has been reshaped through ages. At the same time, Oedipus is discussed in the film from various perspectives (comic, moral, and psychoanalytical) to demonstrate how each of them differently constructs his image. Professor Levy's discussion of love, without even directly mentioning Oedipus's name, resonates with the film's discussion of image versus reality.

Finally, the film's exposition of the theme of sight and blindness is an allusion to the same topic in *Oedipus Rex*. In both ancient myth and modern film a criminal consults

his spiritual advisor. The latter is either blind from the first appearance in the story (an ancient prophet Tieresias) or is gradually losing his sight and, eventually, goes blind (Judah's patient and friend, Rabbi Ben). Both Teiresias and Ben are dominated by Oedipus (the king) and Judah (the doctor) respectively and, therefore, depend on them to some extent. However, in both cases God is the ultimate authority for each of these advisors. Interestingly, both the prophet and rabbi are blind and belong to the spiritual realm. The prophet's blindness supports a wide ancient belief that spiritual enlightenment is achieved through renunciation of material goods including ability to see material objects.[2] The analogy between Teiresias and Ben enables a viewer to correlate Ben's eventual blindness with his clear spiritual vision, and reasonable (if not prophetical) judgment. The irony in the film, however, consists in the fact that Ben, although blind and religious as Tieresias, remains ignorant about Judah's crime. Unlike Tieresias, who knows the real identity of his king, Ben is deluded by Judah. Despite the repetition of the idea of the omnipresent eye of God by religious figures in the film (Rabbis Ben and Sol, Judah's father) and their moralization, they do not have a capacity to reveal truth. Nobody in the film knows about Judah's crime except Judah himself and the people he hired for the murder. It seems like only the audience of the film sees the "real" Judah. Again, the film's play with sight and blindness emphasizes the problem of what is seen and who is seeing.

[2] Such a belief is theoretically substantiated by Plato in his *Allegory of the Cave* (c. 4 BCE). According to Plato, most people live in illusion and have no access to true reality but its primitive imitation. Those who succeed in releasing themselves from the bonds of illusion can achieve reality and become prophets. The prophets' task is to go back to the world of illusion to teach the truth to the ignorant. Tieresias is the kind of prophet Plato has in mind in his allegory. The blind prophet's inability to see the material world available to others is a metaphor of his refusal to live in illusion. However, his sight is clear in the spiritual realm and affords him his talent of prophecy.

The analogy between Ben and Tieresias in terms of sight and vision allows us to suppose that Judah's profession of an eye doctor (ophthalmologist) is chosen with purpose and can also relate the film to the Oedipus myth. Judah's treatment of eye disease may signify his preferring the material world over the spiritual one (connected with blindness). What is significant is that Judah celebrates vision of the world he lives in, which is, in fact, faked and illusive. Indeed, although Judah is praised by his surrounding as a decent person, almost a hero (an excellent doctor, husband, father, and friend), this is his illusive image. What is hidden from Judah's society is accessible to the film audience. The audience knows that Judah is not as decent as he seems to be. The background of Judah's heroic image constitutes reality in fact. On the one hand, Judah is represented as a humanist (donor to medical causes), a good family man, and a healer (a doctor). On the other hand, he uses charity money to make a profit, cheats on his wife, and orders a murder. The difference of the perception of Judah by his society and the film audience suggests that the whole film was made to emphasize the conflict of reality and illusion. In the end of the ancient tragedy, Oedipus blinds himself refusing to see the horror of his life. In contrast, Judah looks quite happy seeing the world of illusion and celebrating his faked image as a hero.

A number of critics of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* discuss the film's theme of vision and blindness (Gilmore, Lee, Nicholas, Vipond), but none of them correlate blindness with spiritual vision which is opposed to the illusion of material world. In my interpretation, Ben is a carrier of spiritual knowledge although he is not as foresighted as Tieresias. Ben is not given knowledge of Judah's crime since religion is not considered in the film as powerful as in the ancient myth. However, Ben is sure that one's actions,

although hidden from society and even oneself, are seen by somebody else. According to his religious views, the illusion is dissipated by God. According to Allen, this capacity characterizes art which makes Judah's crimes and misdemeanors available to the audience through the very film about Judah, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. Judah himself is alienated from the reality in which he is a criminal and prefers to live in illusion. On the contrary, Lee claims that Ben lives in religious illusion while Judah (and other characters without glasses) can see real life. According to Vipond, eyes (and not blindness at all) are thought to be an instrument of perception of truth in the movie. It is due to the fact that the truth about Judah's criminal intention is accessible to Judah himself and his brother Jack (both do not wear glasses) and is hidden from his patients, Ben and Dolores (who have problems with eyes). In contrast, my analysis shows that Judah keeps living in the reality where he is not a criminal but rather a hero. However, his true identity is accessible to the film audience due to the capacities of visual art form. Cinematic possibilities allow Allen to show both sides of Judah, visible and invisible for his society. Vipond's thoughtful remark on the correspondence of the film's problematic aspect (vision) and medium (film, which is visual) is helpful to us because it allows us to see how the form of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* accentuates/reinforces its content.

The movie's references to the ancient tragedy explored above allow a viewer to draw a parallel between Judah and Oedipus. They both are criminals who have gotten away with their crimes (although Oedipus gets away with the crimes committed on ignorance). Both consult spiritual advisors whose opinions they reject. Both live in illusion. Both are praised as heroes unless their image is challenged by reality. The different ending of the ancient and modern stories, however, makes Judah an opposite of

Oedipus. Unlike Oedipus, who discovers his crimes and is publicly punished, Judah avoids any public attention to his crime and strives to forget and conceal all that has happened in order to come back to his calm and normal life. The fundamental difference between Oedipus and Judah is that Oedipus identifies himself with the criminal and thus, accepts the reality in fact while Judah alienates himself from his true identity and thus, prefers to live in illusion. In such a way, the conflict in both stories is based on tension between superficial image and reality but is resolved in an opposite way. The two characters go through a different type of transformation. Oedipus manages to break out of illusion and due to his noble behavior deserves a "real" status of a hero (at least, in the eyes of the reader). In contrast, Judah preserves an illusive image of a hero but lacks any heroism in the audience's eyes.

Oedipus's transformation includes three stages: an illusive image of a hero (for his society), a criminal (for his society and the reader), and a hero (for the reader). First, Oedipus leaves his homeland in order to prevent the horrible prophecy (killing of father and marrying mother) from coming true. His belief that he will manage to avoid it through sacrifice of the advantages of life with his family makes him consider himself as a hero. Next, he resolves the Sphinx's riddle and thus, releases Thebes from the troubles caused by the beast. This allows him to marry Jocasta and become a king of Thebes while creating a heroic image. In twenty years, however, the city's liberty turns out to be the surface of a real problem, the plague. The disaster is ascribed to the former king's murderer who appears to be Oedipus. The beast slayer is not a hero anymore in either Oedipus's or the Thebans' eyes. The heroic image of Oedipus has been nothing but illusion. A "glorious" king turns out to be a criminal who has caused the horrors in his

kingdom. When the truth is revealed during Oedipus's investigation, he is shocked but, nevertheless, accepts his new identity of a criminal. Remarkably, as a detective, Oedipus wants to find out the truth most of all in the play. Tieresias, Jocasta, and the Servant, for example, refuse to talk when they realize that their speech would dissipate the illusion of Oedipus's innocence and heroism. Oedipus, however, forces them to speak, which proves his desire to dig out the truth.

Once he discovers that he is a criminal, Oedipus blinds and sentences himself to the exile from the city. Oedipus's personal punishment signifies that he has identified himself with a criminal. This is also recognizable in his speech:

> I married the woman I should not have married,
>
> I killed the man whom I should not have killed.
>
> (1185-1186)

Oedipus's response to the reality proves that he identifies his crimes. And, although his phrase includes the allusion to the prophecy he learnt from Apollo's oracle and Oedipus's efforts to prevent it from coming true ("I should not have"), this allusion is surrounded by the real action in each line ("I married … married," "I killed … killed"). In this way, the structure of Oedipus's acceptance of his criminal identity signifies that he is concerned with what really happened rather than that it happened from ignorance (which would allow him to live in illusion).

When Oedipus refuses to believe Teiresias in the beginning of his investigation, the criminal is alienated from reality and his crimes. According to the prophet, "he [Oedipus] seems an alien stranger" (451). Teiresias's observation exposes Oedipus as a triply alienated person from that criminal who made all this mess in the city: Oedipus

"seems," he is "alien," and he is a "stranger." And, nevertheless, Oedipus's alienation gradually disappears during the investigation process, driven by his desire for truth. Finally, Oedipus calls himself "godless, child of unholiness" (1360), "evil found" (1397). He characterizes himself as a pure evil which constitutes the crimes he is responsible for. In such a way, Oedipus demonizes himself. And yet, he identifies with the very criminal through the articulation of his new identity: "I married the woman I should not have married..." (1185-1186). Probably, in order to ascertain this bitter reality, which deeply contrasts with the familiar illusion, he repeats this self-identifying phrase again, calling himself "[a] father/ [who] killed his own father, sowed seed in her who bore him" (1496-1497). Oedipus doubles the heaviness of his crimes through the double structure of his observation. He not only killed his father but became a father himself. He not only slept with his mother but produced children with her. In this way, Oedipus struggles with getting used to reality.

The acts of self-identification with a criminal, self-accusation, and self-punishment allow Oedipus to break the illusion and be honored by the reader. Unlike Judah, who not only avoids any kind of punishment but hides what he has done (telling lies to the police, his own family, and even Ben, his confessor), Oedipus strives to reveal the truth by any means from the very beginning. However, Oedipus cannot bear to see the result of his crimes and, therefore, blinds himself. The observer of Jocasta's suicide and Oedipus's self-blinding reports the words Oedipus addressed to his eyes: "No more shall you/ Behold the evils I have suffered and done." (1271-1272). Interestingly, Oedipus separates himself from his eyes and vision. First, his eyes betrayed him by creating an illusive reality. Next, they reminded him about this betrayal. His unwillingness to see

what he has done once again evidences his deep repentance and self-criticism. Oedipus's blindness is a signifier of his enlightenment achieved through revealing and accepting his identity. His noble behavior and the sacrifice of his personal belongings (sight and citizenship) for civil justice make Oedipus look heroic in the reader's eyes. And this heroism now originates from reality rather than from illusion.

In contrast to Oedipus, Judah neglects social morality and justice in order to keep his wealth and status. As Vipond nicely puts it, Judah sacrificed his "humanity" in order to preserve "the external manifestation of his success" (100). Judah's behavior is far away from what is traditionally considered a heroic one. And, although Judah's society is not aware of his true identity, it is revealed to the film audience, due to the art of cinema. Although he left no trace of his crimes and misdemeanors within his world, they remain in the film about him and its title. What is most striking in Judah's storyline is that he tries to trick even the audience of the film. In such a way, Allen creates tension even in the viewer's perception of Judah. This gives the director a ground to reflect on art's capacities. Indeed, Judah seems decent even when his crimes and misdemeanors are revealed by the film director. The moment Judah learns that "it's over" (Dolores has been murdered), his face gets pale, and voice trembles. He tells his brother he cannot speak. Then Judah returns to his guests and looks distracted. The camera focuses on him and transfers the viewer to his recollections of some romantic moments of his relationships with Dolores. And, although the sound remains that of his chatting family, the viewer can see what Judah is actually thinking and, probably, sees in his imagination. His behavior makes him look moved by his participation in Dolores's death. Later, Judah confesses to Jack he is close to reporting the murder to the police. Therefore, it may seem Judah

deeply repents the crime and, therefore, similarly to Oedipus, identifies himself with the criminal. However, the film audience should not allow a character to mislead them. The director's technique insists that the movie, similarly to *Oedipus Rex*, is about superficial image versus reality. A deliberate watching will show that Judah never identifies himself with Dolores's murderer. He does not even claim it was his idea to murder her. In fact, he is completely alienated from her murderer and only performs his repentance in order to appeal to himself, his conscience, God (who may exist, in his opinion), or the film audience (which is implied by the very fact of film making).

In Judah's first conversation with his brother Jack about his problem with Dolores (how to make her stop blackmailing him), Judah performs his alienation from the idea of murder. Judah never says directly that he wants Jack to get rid of Dolores. However, Judah's ownership of this idea logically follows from his meeting with Jack. First, they talk in the environment where nobody is supposed to see or hear them. Their meeting, organized in secrecy, makes a viewer suspect that they will discuss something criminal. When the two move to the separate (and, supposedly, empty) building to talk, the camera shoots them from their back and is placed beyond the bushes. It creates an effect that somebody watches them. Such a perspective makes the brothers look vulnerable. Since, eventually, the operation is a success, the viewer is aware that there was nobody there except the omnipresent God (according to Ben) and the very audience of the film. The invisible observer implied in this scene makes the situation look suspicious and calls for a viewer's alertness. Second, the very beginning of the brothers' dialogue reveals what kind of relationship they have. The two meet very seldom, mostly, when one of them is in trouble and needs help from another. Jack seems very reserved, skeptical, short and

cautious in his words. These features along with his Frankenstein-like sullen look and stature, and dark leather jacket make him personify a stereotypical criminal. Finally, when the brothers reach the main point of their conversation, it gets clear that Jack is a professional criminal. Simply inviting him to talk privately implies that Judah wants him to organize the murder of his lover. In such a way, Judah deliberately performs his innocence and alienation from the criminal to move the audience to pity him.

During the whole conversation Judah behaves like he does not know what he wants from Jack, and, certainly, does not approve any idea of a murder. The ridiculousness of Judah's behavior is emphasized by Jack's constant wondering why Judah has called him after all:

Jack

What would you like me to do?

Judah

I don't know, but she's killing me.

Jack

Want me to have somebody talk to her?

Judah

Like what?

Jack

Straighten her out.

Judah

What do you mean? Threaten her? That's all I need.

Jack

How else do you expect to keep her quiet?

Judah

I don't know. Jack, I don't know.

Jack

Well...

Judah

Christ, Jack. What are you suggesting?

Jack

What did you call me for?

Judah

I don't know. I hoped you'd have more experience

with something like this.

Jack

You called because you need some dirty work done.

That's all you ever call for.

Judah

Look how bitter you are.

Judah constantly asks questions about the matter as though Jack knows it better. Jack represents a figure of wisdom and experience; Judah seeks his advice. However, Jack can suggest only murdering since this is his sphere, and Judah is perfectly aware of it according to Jack's response ("What did you call me for?"). Jack's question proves that the very calling him implies that there is a need for a man who can organize a murder. Furthermore, it is obvious that there is no alternative if Judah wants to conceal the truth.

And, nevertheless, Judah keeps denying the very possibility of murder. Judah's face is hidden from the film audience; his voice is low and trembling. His responses make him look completely innocent as though he has never had even a thought of murdering anyone ("Christ, Jack. What are you suggesting?" "Look how bitter you are"). According to Judah's performance, it is Jack who is suggesting a murder and making Judah shocked. It is Jack who is "bitter," not his pure brother. Jack appears to be an ultimate author of the idea of murder, while Judah seems to do nothing with this plan. The reality in fact becomes Jack's domain while Judah constructs an illusion. Judah's multiple "I don't know" allows him, on the one hand, to perform innocence and confusion, but on the other hand, to provoke Jack to make the expected suggestion ("You called because you need some dirty work done"). In other words, Judah runs with the hare and hunts with the hounds. He manages to appeal to his observer (whoever he or she is, God, a viewer, or Judah himself) and to gain his point.

For those who do not highlight the question of image and identity in the film, it is easy to admit that the murder was Jack's idea unexpected by Judah (Vipond). Indeed, this is what the screen (the surface) shows as well as what Judah wants everyone else to believe. Vipond offers a thoughtful interpretation of the film's problematics but neglects its close analysis and, therefore, misses some of its underlying points. On the other hand, Fahy, while exploring the role of classical music in the film, provides a detailed analysis of several scenes and comes to conclusions similar to mine. According to Fahy, Judah knows in advance what Jack would suggest but gives him "a class-conditional response" (85). Indeed, Judah belongs to an upper class which does not openly reward "dirty work."

In such a way, critical opinions disagree over the matter. This proves a profound work made by Woody Allen to complicate the issue of apparent image and clear vision.

Despite the serious subject of the brother's conversation, it looks comical. Judah invites Jack to talk about the murder but makes out that this idea is too amoral to be ever discussed. In order to play up to Judah's game, Jack suggests forgetting what he has said about the murder. In response, Judah starts nervously moving back and forth around the room spreading his hands and yelling at Jack: "How to forget? I risk my entire life!" His behavior seems to tell Jack: "I want you to get rid of her but release me from saying this; you should understand it as it is." Remarkably, Jack understands Judah's mute appeal. In contrast to his brother, Jack looks absolutely confident and stable. His face is open and relaxed, he does not expose any emotions and sits steadily on the chair as though he is familiar with such a routine and waits for Judah to calm down. Since Judah does not want to directly say what he wants from Jack in order not to sound criminal, Jack does it himself:

Jack

She can be gotten rid of. I know people. Money'll
buy whatever's necessary.

Judah

I won't even comment on that. That's mind-
boggling.

Jack

What did you want me to do when you called me?

In response to Jack's formulating of Judah's primary intention (which, on the surface, looks like Jack's suggestion), Judah pathetically refuses to discuss it and performs being shocked again ("That's mind-boggling"). Jack, again, is wondering what he is needed for. This routine takes most of their conversation. Therefore, it is even surprising that Judah, eventually, calls Jack to order the murder: "I think you can do what we have discussed. How much do you need?" Although the murder is still not named ("what we have discussed") and its discussion is quite odd and indirect, Jack is absolutely aware of what Judah is talking about. Again, Judah manages both to perform innocence and make Jack do what he wants him to do: to murder Dolores. Judah appears to be a great trickster since he can employ the tension between image and reality for his benefit.

One can argue that despite Judah's alienation from the idea of murdering, his repentance and suffering after the murder is real. Jolley, for example, compares Judah's pangs of conscience to those of Macbeth (figurative blood on his hands). Indeed, Judah looks moved by Dolores's death. But what is the reason for that, her death or his ordering her murder? And does he identify himself with her murderer and accuse himself the way Oedipus does? Let us see beyond Judah's pale face, trembling voice and distracted look to what else happens the night Judah receives the confirmation call from Jack. Right after the phone conversation, Judah washes his hands. This gesture symbolically allows him to keep himself pure from Dolores's blood. In response to Jack's news, Judah asks, "What am I gonna do? I've got guests here now." His physical response demonstrates his emotions but its verbal part touches upon the necessary actions that should be done rather than any sentiments. He quickly figures out that he has to do something (as going to Dolores's apartment to remove the traces of his presence in her life), and his only concern

is his guests. Indeed, it is very impolite for him to leave his family and guests in the middle of the dinner (as Miriam's embarrassment suggests). However, leaving his guests will not spoil his reputation as much as being accused of a murder.

When Judah comes into Dolores's apartment, he looks at the corpse, shocked as though he has had no idea that it would happen and what it would be like. The soundtrack dramatizes the situation. A viewer listens to the same music which accompanied the scene of the murderer. This music is a *String Quartet* by Schubert, Judah's favorite composer. Possibly, this is the very music on the disk Dolores gave Judah as his birthday present at the gas station a few days earlier. Dolores's choice of a present is based on her recollections of their walking on the beach and their discussion of classical music. Ironically, Schubert is associated with their romantic love and Judah's involvement in her murder. The classical music becomes a layer, an invisible boundary between memories and the present, the possibility and truth, surface and depth, image and reality. Music, like film, is an art form Allen employs to explore the issue of perception. Interestingly, Fahy's Marxist reading suggests that classical music in the movie indicates Judah's upper class; its absence diminishes the status differences between Judah and the film audience and, therefore, evokes sympathy towards Judah (89). In such a way, Fahy, too, admits that art has power to manipulate one's vision of reality. Indeed, when the music stops, Judah stops being associated with the hypocritical bourgeois and it is likely that a viewer may sympathize with him and even believe that he or she could act similarly to Judah in such a complicated case. Shortly after performing an upper-class shock, Judah starts walking around and collecting Dolores's stuff, which can cast suspicion on him. The sudden change in Judah's behavior signifies his performance of regret. Instead of crying

over the dead lover's body (as Oedipus would do), Judah quickly does his job and leaves the place. In such a way, Judah's actions reveal that he is worried about preservation of his image of a decent person rather than asserting his identity as a criminal. The art (film and music), however, enables the viewer to perceive this tension and Judah's hypocrisy.

Several scenes after the dead corpse episode suggest that Judah is suffering from pangs of conscience. However, this is but an illusion. Although Judah does not sleep well for a while, tells Jack about going to the police and begins to "believe in god," this does not last long, no more than two or three months, and during this period he never names himself a murderer. When he enters the house he used to live in and initiates a conversation with his imaginary family, he seems to suggest that he killed a man, but shortly after that corrects himself:

Judah

And if a man commits a crime, if he… if he kills…

Sol

One way or another he will be punished. . . .

Sol

. . . murder will out.

Judah

Who said anything about murder?

All

You did.

Judah

Did I?

This dialogue proves that Judah refuses to be identified with a murderer. First, he is talking about a murderer as another person ("a man," "he"). Second, he denies the ownership of his words about a murder ("Who said anything about murder?"). In such a way, before and after the crime, Judah is alienated from the murderer. And, certainly, he is literally alienated from him. He is two times removed from an actual killer. This is due to the fact that Judah hires Jack to organize the crime; Jack, in turn, hires another man to keep Judah "uninvolved."

It may seem that Judah is tortured by his conscience due to his multiple recollections of Dolores after her death. However, they still prove his alienation from the criminal action. He recalls only the happiest and romantic moments of their relationships that celebrate their love. The recollections serve to prolong an illusion of his innocence. They suggest that Judah was happy with Dolores and, therefore, he had no need to kill her. Unlike Oedipus who cannot see the real horror of his crimes (his children born from his mother), Judah cherishes an illusion. Similarly to Oedipus, Judah blinds himself but only in a metaphorical sense, and for a selfish reason. Therefore, it is quite logical that in his recollections, Judah does not repeat scenes of his recent quarrels with Dolores, her bothering him, or his thinking about the murder, which would evidence his repentance. On the contrary, he acts like someone who regrets the loss of Dolores without causing this loss. Once again, this proves that Judah performs his life to maintain an illusion of his decency and heroism.

Even when Judah confesses to Clifford on the wedding under the cover of an idea for a film, he still does not identify himself with the murderer. His very third person narrative makes his alienation from the criminal consistent during the film. From Judah's

monologue, a viewer learns that Judah was able to suppress his conscience and return to his "protected world of wealth and privilege." Wealth and privilege are an essential part of his heroic image. While decent Clifford does not believe that people "can live after that," a former criminal, Judah shines with happiness and confidence. Nevertheless, the very fact of telling his story to somebody else makes Lee suggest that Judah feels guilty and, therefore, is unhappy. Remarkably, in her book on Allen's films, Lee provides a correspondence with Allen in which he disagrees with the critic's perspective: "You are wrong about Judah; he feels no guilt…" (Lee 162). Gilmore also criticizes Lee's reading and interprets this dialogue as a cinematic device used to demonstrate the role of "narrativizing" in life (Gilmore 91). From knowing the stories one should learn the possible choices he or she could make in the future. While Gilmore's reading is about the movie's intellectual purpose, Lee proclaims that Judah does not get away with crimes as many others see. In contrast, in my interpretation, Judah performs his moral and emotional involvement in the murder. Therefore, he makes up these stories about a man who is not identical to him but whose experience is the same. The very narration of somebody else's experience enables Judah to represent his recollections as but a fiction, both for his listener and himself. Unlike Oedipus, Judah does not go through a transformation. If Oedipus breaks illusions to find out his true identity, then Judah is more than satisfied with the superficial image of reality. For Judah image is what is real and what matters in society. In such a way, Judah's storyline suggests that the championship of vivid image over hidden reality is interconnected with status which characterizes people living in "the protected world of wealth and privilege," mainly, the upper class.

The idea of image unites the two, seemingly divorced, storylines of the film. Indeed, from first sight, they seem unrelated since they have a different plot and spirit. If Judah's story seems tragic and heavy, then Clifford's is comic and light. If the first story is about the criminal (Judah) who tricks his society, then the second one is about a loser (Clifford) and a winner, although a bit phony (Lester). The dramatic classical soundtrack makes Judah's story more serious and heavy, while frivolous jazz adds lightness to Clifford's story. The connections of the two plots through family bonds of certain characters, films that Clifford watches in the movie theatre (which almost literally repeat scenes from Judah's part), and Clifford's conversation with Judah in the end of the film - look completely artificial. There is, however, a more profound connection between the two parts which justifies their coexistence. Clifford's storyline serves to emphasize the role of art in the perception of reality. If Judah's story only hints that film may both create an illusion (Judah's existence and decency) and dissipate it (Judah's criminal identity, performance and image making) than Clifford's part speaks aloud about possibilities of film through showing the film making process. Indeed, the film Clifford makes about Lester has the same purpose as Allen's film about Judah – to reveal a character's hypocrisy and dissipate the illusive image of a hero. Furthermore, Lester appears to be a Judah-like figure in that storyline while Clifford refers to Allen himself. In such a way, Clifford's storyline is a ground for Allen's self-reflexivity. In this part, which is still a work of art, Allen reflects on the creation of art and art's capacities (representation of reality and manipulation of viewer's vision) in general and his own film (about Judah) in particular. In such a way, an incorporation of Clifford's storyline to

the film's canvas makes the whole work a metatext. The film references other texts (such as Sophocles's tragedy) as well as itself.

The Lester-Clifford story explores the same conflict as the Judah story: the tension between what is real and what is seen. Lester, like Judah, has a heroic image. Clifford seems to be the only person from Lester's surrounding who does not praise or respect him but despises him for his shallowness and hypocrisy. However, neither Clifford's wife Wendy, nor his beloved Halley agree with his opinion regarding Lester. Wendy extolls Lester to the sky. She expresses her admiration for Lester through constant enumeration of his heroic qualities ("He is attractive, he is rich, he is the most charming man…") and juxtaposing him with the less successful Clifford (who is jealous of Lester, in her opinion). In fact, Clifford is one of the film's losers. Wendy's disrespect of her husband is expressed in her unwillingness to make love with him. She probably considered Clifford as a potential winner when she met him, due to the fact that Clifford was a beginner film director, engaged with his profession. This could make anyone believe he would achieve success. However, years in marriage showed Clifford as a loser. Therefore, he stopped attracting her sexually and, eventually, she "met someone else," as she whispers to her brother in a burst of happiness. Lester is more than happy hearing that his sister has finally realized what kind of a man she needs. It is not only her joy that he is concerned with but his multiple victories over the loser Clifford (including success in career and women). These victories satisfy Lester's appetite for being a winner as well as his need to avenge himself on Clifford for his low-quality film about Lester. This film was the only hope Clifford had to show the "real" Lester, who is testy, authoritarian phony, and a philanderer and tyrant, as Clifford sees him. By means of art, Clifford

manages to reveal Lester's hypocritical nature. Instead of staged scenes prepared by Lester to maintain his image of a perfect man, Clifford uses natural scenes from Lester's life which show Lester as he is in reality. In such a way, Clifford uses the art of cinema to expose Lester's identity that lies underneath his superficial image. Thus, Allen demonstrates art as a medium to dissipate an illusion of one's image.

Ironically, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* shows that art can not only reveal the illusion of images but also manipulate one's perception of reality. Indeed, art is an illusion itself. Therefore, the worlds created by artists may be limited only by their imagination. The fact that Clifford's film is a documentary only strengthens this idea. Although a documentary film is often considered to be more realistic, the reality it features depends on the director's choice of shots, editing, and other filmic devices. Therefore, the cinematic representation of life, even in the documentary, is artificial. The audience, aware of the possibility of deception, may not take Clifford's vision of Lester's identity for granted. The opportunity of artistic choice allows Clifford to expose only negative sides of Lester's personality, as though Lester has no merits at all. Through cross-cutting of Lester yelling at his employees with Mussolini's fascist performance, Clifford suggests juxtaposing the two figures. In such a way, art's capacities enable Clifford to exaggerate Lester's monstrosity and thus, manipulate the audience's perception of Lester. The main film, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, as a self-reflexive one, demonstrates awareness of art's manipulative capacity when Halley advocates Lester's kind personality. In fact, Clifford falls in love with Halley and considers Lester as his rival. Therefore, the primary goal of Clifford's work is to open up Lester's hypocrisy for Halley so that she could not be charmed by the latter. Halley watches the film but,

unfortunately for its director, this does not make her believe the suggested reality and, consequently, hate or despise Lester. Instead, she marries Lester and thus, makes Clifford's most fearful apprehensions come true. In such a way, Allen meditates on the complexity of vision as well as the ambiguousness of art in its representation of reality.

Watching *Crimes and Misdemeanors* enables a viewer to grasp an image making technique. Indeed, the narratives about Judah and Lester demonstrate how their image is created. The film suggests one can hide from society what it does not appreciate. Instead, one may expose those qualities that are considered decent and heroic. Allen's representation of Judah is an example of creating an image in society, although ambiguous. Indeed, although Judah is a hypocritical criminal, he seems decent and sincere in his moral suffering and epiphanies. Clifford's film about Lester can be used as a manual of how to represent a person in film the way one desires it. First, one needs to cut only relevant shots. Second, these shots should be cross-cut with those which represent a certain idea about human personality. The cross-cutting technique allows an editor to achieve a desirable effect. Cross-cutting Lester with a fascist dictator reveals Lester as a tyrant. Play with meaning in editing is a moment of the film's self-reflexivity. Indeed, this is Allen's tribute to Eisenstein's theory of montage. Along with montage, Clifford employs superimposition. The close-up shot of a chewing horse, superimposed with Lester's speech about what comedy is, represents Lester as stupid and pompous. Despite its artistic richness, Clifford's film does not appeal to Lester who seeks a better representation of himself. Therefore, he fires Clifford and decides to make the film himself. Taking into account the image making technique, proposed by the film, a viewer may expect that Lester, eventually, will be shown as the opposite of that one depicted by

Clifford. Through meditation on image making in film (examined in Clifford's part), Allen's drama reflects on the broader social question, the construction of image in society (examined in Judah's part). In such a way, the two storylines mirror and enrich each other's ideas about image versus reality.

Along with being self-reflexive in terms of film and image making technique, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* reflects on itself and, therefore, appears to be a self-conscious metatext. Clifford's part mirrors Judah's in terms of tension, ideas, and even plot. Clifford's and Lester's story may be considered as a tool Allen uses to meditate on his film on Judah. In this sense, these storylines are divorced and at the same time connected. Indeed, Lester is synchronized with Judah; they are almost doubles. Clifford is a film director played by Woody Allen. Both are considered as noncommercial directors with limited audience. Both complain about their work. If Clifford's films are banned from distribution on TV, then Allen considers his film a weak one due to its success. "If it really was a wonderful film, I feel it wouldn't get that interest," he complains (Lax 278). These similarities call for seeing Clifford as Woody Allen's alter-ego. As Gilmore proposes, the whole movie is about Allen himself. Remarkably, Clifford and Allen do the same sort of job – they reveal the illusion of a hypocritical person's image. While Allen undermines Judah's decency, Clifford struggles to do it in relation to Lester. Both use art as an instrument for that purpose. Therefore, Clifford's film about Lester may be considered as a fictional copy of the fictional original. Such an interpretation is consistent with the fact that Allen completely rewrote Clifford's part after watching the rough cut of the film centered on Judah's actions.[3] As Allen's biographer tells, first, Clifford was given a small role of a director who films the life of the patients in the nursing home

[3] For a story of the creation of *Crimes and Misdemeanors,* see Lax 361-369.

where his beloved Halley works and "not the funny and damning film-within-the-film he makes of his brother-in-low Lester" (Lax 361). Allen's artistic intuition told him he had to reshoot Clifford's part: "The bad news is, Mia's [Mia Farrow who played Halley] and my story doesn't work" (Lax 362). In such a way, facts prove that Allen's revision of the film forced him to provide more thoughtful connections between its two storylines. This revision resulted in the very self-reflexivity and metatextuality which make *Crimes and Misdemeanors* such a spectacular work of art.

The major point in the connection of the two storylines is Lester's and Judah's doubling. The film analysis demonstrates that Lester may be a potential Judah. Similarly to Judah, Lester hides his misdemeanors (revealed in Clifford's film) to preserve his ideal image. Both misdemeanors are available for the audience's judgment but not for the characters' society. Both Judah and Lester get rid of those who know about their misdemeanors. While Judah organizes Dolores's murder, Lester discharges Clifford. Since Judah's story suggests that one's misdemeanors may lead to a crime, a viewer may assume that Lester's misdemeanors may turn to something criminal. Most of the critical works on *Crimes and Misdemeanors* discuss Lester's and Judah's similarities, but none of them considers Lester as potential Judah. This, however, is vivid in the editing of the final episode of the film. When, at the wedding, Judah shares with Cliff "an idea for a film" and talks about a rich and prosperous man without problems so far, the shot of Judah breaks into the shot of Lester. Judah keeps narrating while the camera features Lester walking around the banquet's hall in a grand manner. Lester looks happy and proud of himself, as though he exemplifies the imaginary person Judah is talking about. Indeed, Lester personifies richness and prosperity, "wealth and privilege." Everyone at

the banquet (except Clifford) seems to admire Lester the way Judah is praised and admired at his banquet in the beginning of the film. Such structure in the film makes it symmetrical. The parallel sides of the film are its two storylines. And this parallel is achieved through art and for art's purpose.

Interestingly, art is shown in the film as an ambiguous litmus paper. On the one hand, it reveals what is hidden; on the other hand, it creates tension and riddles. When facing artificial reality one may never know how real it is. Judah and Dolores talk about Schubert; next Schubert's music enters the diegetic sound of the film about Judah and serves to create an ambiguity in the audience's perception of Judah. As a matter of interest, Schubert's music characterizes Judah as a romantic, intellectual, and, probably, noble person. At the same time, this music is associated with his crime. Next, Judah and Clifford talk about film. Judah communicates his story as a possible film plot. His story is real, but the possibility to envision it as a film turns his life into illusion. Since the story is represented as an illusive one, Clifford has no ground to believe it. For Judah, however, the story is plausible, and therefore, he argues with Cliff until he breaks off the conversation to enjoy the illusion of his image as well as his mastery of creating this illusion. Clifford relies on the art's capacity to reveal the illusiveness of a socially accepted image of Lester but does not believe in the reality of the screened life himself. When he watches the movie about planning a murder which mirrors the "reality" of Judah and Jack, Clifford rejects its plausibility. **"**This only happens in the movies," he says. As words spoken by the character of the film, they leave a viewer to guess what is real and what is not in this film. The discussion of film reminds us that a part of the film

within this film is a matter of self-reflexivity and metatextuality. And yet, it serves to re-emphasize the theme of illusion and vision explored in the film.

When the guru of positive attitude and love, Prof Levy, commits suicide, Clifford is in despair. The whole work on the philosopher's positive claims is not worth anything if he kills himself. It is due to the implied expectation by the viewer that the documentary film would reflect reality. At the same time, Prof Levy's attitude caught by the celluloid moved Clifford and Halley and they believed him until he died. When Allen's film ends up with a retrospective of its various moments accompanied by the pathetic speech by Prof Levy, a viewer has very little idea whether to believe it or not. In such a way, the film reveals art to play an ambiguous role in human perception of reality. Lester's personality is shown ambiguously too, again, with means of art. Clifford's film about Lester seems to reveal the latter's hypocrisy. However, Halley thinks Lester is shown worse than he is in real life. She admits that along with vices, he has a number of merits. Clifford positions himself as an intellectual who watches classical movies, makes serious documentaries, and reads Joyce. In contrast, Lester is superficial, in Clifford's opinion. Therefore, when Lester talks about Oedipus in a nontraditional way, Clifford considers the comment stupid. However, another text referenced by both Clifford and Lester, proves that Lester is not as superficial and stupid as he seems. When Halley cites a line from Emily Dickinson's poem, Clifford hastens to continue in order to appeal to her. However, he provides only one line. Surprisingly for him, Lester finishes the stanza and provides another one. The poem about death and immortality is, certainly, a self-reflexive moment. At the same time, as a form of art, the poem serves to once again create a tension between image and reality.

This study shows that a nonconventional reading of Allen's drama, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, through a classical mythology paradigm (Oedipus's struggle with illusion) rediscovers the film as an intertext and a metatext highly concerned with art's capability to represent reality.

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CHAPTER 3

NARCISSUS'S SEARCH FOR SELF-IDENTITY IN *MATCH POINT*

Woody Allen's drama *Match Point* (2005) is conventionally considered as a reception of Theodore Dreiser' *An American Tragedy* and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (Fuller, Horst, Ross, Struchebrukhov). This is due to the thematic allusions and direct literal references. In both novels, the protagonist is a murderer punished in the end of the story, which is unlike Chris who kills his lover but stays unpunished. The film's major topic is usually considered to be the murderer's moral choice and getting away with his crime, because of plot parallels between the film and the novels. Since the film protagonist often discusses the role of fortune in human life and was fortunate himself, another significant topic of the film is also thought to be luck itself (Brown and Smith, Cooper, Fuller, Ross, Smithey, Struchebrukhov). I would like to explore an important dimension of *Match Point* that critics have yet to address, the problem of self-identification. This theme is apparent through the film if we view it from the classical mythology perspective. In this chapter, I analyze *Match Point* as a reception of the Narcissus myth, which is known from the poem *Metamorphoses* (CE 8) by the ancient Roman poet Ovid. Reading the film in the context of the classical ancient myth enables a viewer to interpret the film as Allen's reflection on the problem of self-identification in the contemporary world, which is dominated by such popularized but

misleading values as success and wealth. In the modern version of narcissism, one pursues success and wealth as an ultimate goal and triumph of personal growth while often neglecting harmony of material interests with spiritual demands such as love and true self-identity.

In order to pursue my thesis, I use theoretical approaches to comparative literature elaborated by Erich Auerbach, Henry H.H. Remak, and Vladimir Bibler. In his essay on philology and world literature, Auerbach suggests starting a research from the so-called "point of departure" (134-138). This can be a particular thematic, generic, or stylistic feature of the text that generates a specific topic of research. This feature of the text can resonate or contrast with other texts. The close reading of the text in the context of these other texts can yield a more profound understanding of its features than the separate analysis. Auerbach provides the scheme for such a comparative research in his article "Odysseus's Scar." I will use Auerbach's model of textual analysis through a short illuminating passage for my approach to the film. The point of departure for my analysis is the series of scenes from the first part of the film which feature Chris exploring the wealthy estate of Chloe's family along with various identities available for himself.

Remak's approach to comparative literature appeals to my research since it allows one to analyze literature and film in the context of one another. Remak suggests that comparative literature is the study of relationships between literature and other areas of knowledge and belief including arts (1, 22-23). Finally, this chapter is situated within the theoretical framework proposed by Vladimir Bibler. He argues that no work should be studied without the study of others. He elaborated the dialogical approach to the study of art. According to this approach, the study of contemporary works of art in the context of

ancient ones makes the interpretation of both of them more insightful. Remak's and Bibler's comparative and dialogical approaches will help me show that *Match Point* is better understood if we approach it from a comparative framework.

The close reading of the film in the context of the myth of Narcissus makes the theme of self-identification crucial for its analysis. Narcissus, a handsome youth, rejected love of others for the sake of his pride. However, he suffered in the end the same way his suitors did. He was cursed to fall in love with his own reflection in the creek. The problem of Narcissus's interaction with the object of his love was Narcissus's inability to possess himself. It was due to the fact that the boy could not identify himself. This was an irony of his fate as well as his punishment for being too proud. Even when he recognized himself in the water, he could not overcome passion for himself and eventually died because of it.

The protagonist in *Match Point*, Chris Wilton, similarly to Narcissus, struggles to identify himself. A professional tennis player from Ireland, Chris looks around for a better life. He probes identifying himself with opera characters, wealthy people, and office workers. However, he makes a wrong choice. While taking somebody else's place he is forced by circumstances to become a murderer. Eventually, Chris kills his lover Nola, the only person he has not been indifferent to.

The point of departure for my research is the first estate sequence in the film where Chris meets Nola. Chris has been invited to Chloe's family estate. The sequence provides a different setting for each scene. These different scenes exemplify different identities seemingly available for Chris. In a four-minute interval Chris literally walks a path from the big tennis court outside the house to the tiny table tennis room. In the

middle of his way he lingers over a moment in the big wealthy living room. In such a short period of time the filmmaker manages to demonstrate Chris's search for self-identity. The visual narrative puts several perspectives at Chris's disposal. These include a tennis player, a gigolo, an opera character, an aristocrat, and an outsider.

In the beginning of this sequence, Chris and Chloe play tennis outside the wealthy house. Chris is represented as a tennis player and instructor. Since Chloe is a weaker competitor, Chris may feel satisfied as a winner. Earlier in the film, Chris explains his quitting professional tennis because of the fact that "[he] was never going to be Rusedski or Agassi." Having considered himself as a loser while playing with other professionals, he now has a chance to assert himself as an excellent player. Although Chloe's clumsiness and uncertainty on the court are explicitly visible in the clip through Emily Mortimer's acting, this does not confuse Chris. When after their match Chloe notes that her performance was "dreadful," Chris disagrees. He admits that she has "a very unique style." In such a way, he gives himself credit for a good play with a comparable competitor. Interestingly enough, Chris himself is characterized as a player with a unique style. Later, when Chris encounters his past in the face of his friend and colleague in tennis, Henry, the latter praises Chris's play ("you could be a poet with the racket"). Being aware of own strengths, Chris projects them on Chloe, suggesting, thus, that they are equal, at least in tennis.

After their match, Chris and Chloe leave the court to drink lemonade on the background of the swimming pool. They talk about his past life as a professional tennis player and his plans to change his life. At this point Chris rejects his identity as a tennis instructor. In the opposite direction, he shares with Chloe his wish "to make a

contribution." Interestingly, in the previous scene the netting was used as a visible separation of Chris and Chloe. The mise-en-scène now includes the two characters looking at each other and drinking lemonade with no boundary between them. That signifies that Chris has made a step from tennis career to a wealthy society. The tennis court as a symbol of his past remains almost invisible on the background. The camera moves in such a way to make the swimming pool as a background dominate over anything else. The pool along with drinks can be interpreted as an erotic implication of this scene, as these attributes are often associated in modern cinema with erotic scenes.[4] The conversation between the two characters is more frivolous than in the previous scene. After identifying Chris as "a poor boy from Ireland come to London," Chloe offers him to meet in the gallery. Chris bends towards her and admits that this is a date. Then he ambiguously notes that he has to change his clothes and mentions his sweaty body. This is an allusion to a possibility of sexual relations with Chloe, which he accepts along with her offer of a date. This scene opens for Chris a perspective of being a gigolo.

The lemonade shot cuts into a comparatively short panoramic shot of the guests of Chloe's family walking outside. The camera shoots them from a high angle beyond the bushes. The camera position creates an impression that somebody has climbed on the tree or the green fence and peeks at the people from above. This may symbolize a point of view of Chris, an outsider in the aristocratic circle, who peeks them from beyond the fence. The fence, in such a way, represents a boundary between Chris and high society.

[4] Contemporary Western cinema provides a lot of examples of sexual implication of pools. In Paul Verhoeven's *Showgirls* (1995), one of the central sexual scenes begins at the pool and continues inside the pool. In Roger Kumble's *Cruel Intentions* (1999), the male and female protagonists discuss a possibility of sexual relations while meeting in the pool. The man and woman drinking together, traditionally, ends up with sexual relations, in many films too. Chris and Paul Weitz's *American Pie* (1999) and its sequels are good examples of this scheme.

The vision of relaxed aristocrats is accompanied by opera music. Since the source of this music is not identified within a frame and its tone and loudness remains the same in the next indoor shot, I suggest that this is a nondiegetic sound. It may be designed to emphasize the aristocratic atmosphere in the estate or to convey Chris's vision of the high society world. I am inclined to choose the second version of the soundtrack's implication. It is due to the fact that Chris's interest in opera and high society has been already established in the film before the analyzed sequence with his own words ("I love opera"). Besides, as I noticed above, the opera music sounds at the same time when high society is shown from Chris's point of view. To summarize, I argue that the music symbolizes Chris's desire for a place in high society while the fence around the garden signifies unavailability of this place for Chris at the moment. At the same time, the fence as a barrier that can be overcome suggests that Chris is required to surmount himself in order to satisfy his desire.

In the next indoor shot, Chris goes downstairs from his bedroom to the large living room in the house. The opera music from the previous shot continues to accompany the visual image. Again, it sounds presumably in Chris's head as an association with a desirable life in high society. In such a way, opera music as an audial dimension of the sequence with visual aristocratic background represents two possible identities for Chris, mainly, an opera character and an aristocrat. Compared with the tennis court scene, Chris now looks more aristocratic, having changed his tennis uniform to a formal suit. Interestingly, in the beginning of this shot Chris visually merges for a moment with an aristocrat from the family portrait on the wall. Indeed, both Chris and the person in the picture are dressed in dark suits. However, their figures look different. The

aristocrat is shown en face. He looks confident sitting in the chair with his head up. In contrast, Chris is shown from his side, stoop-shouldered and with his head down. In such a way, although Chris tries to enter the aristocratic society, his visual depiction proposes that he can only pretend to be an aristocrat (wearing aristocratic clothes and having an "aristocratic" opera music in mind). In fact, Chris lacks the confidence that is proper for aristrocrats. He moves hesitantly as an alien. It is likely that the very clothes he wears makes him feel uncomfortable since he has not been used to wear a traditional male suit. This scene proposes that an aristocrat is not his true identity; it does not fit him. Nevertheless, Chris looks with cold interest on the family diplomas in golden frames which decorate the wall. They probably represent the family's honor and pride. Chris's cold glance suggests that he performs indifference to the attributes of the rich. This performance evidences that he considers himself as a possible possessor of such a life rather than a hunter for it.

The next shots show that, actually, there is no place for Chris among aristocrats. Chris enters the large, rich and empty living room. Later in the film, this room will be a setting for family events. At the same time it has multiple bookshelves with antique editions. Therefore, I think this room is partly a living room, partly a library. The living room is shown from the points of view of both Chris and the implied inhabitants of the room. The distanced camera makes Chris's figure small and inconspicuous. The camera shooting Chris in the room is placed beyond the photo frames (with implied images of the aristocratic family). This creates an impression that the aristocratic inhabitants of the room observe him as an outsider. Indeed, Chris stands a few steps from the doorway and hesitatingly looks around, as a self-invited guest. The room is, however, empty. That

signifies that nobody waits for him in a high society. On the other hand, it foreshadows Chris's loneliness in such a circle.

There are classical style statues in the room. This is consistent with the tradition of this film to associate high society with classical art (portrait on the wall, antique books, classical interior, and opera music). On the other hand, these statues in the room substitute for absent people. Interestingly, Chris's figure is placed near the male bust on the shelf. This mise-en-scène may symbolize that Chris's desire for an aristocratic life can turn him from a living and emotional guy to a heartless and cold stone-like person, like a statue. I interpret this scene as a warning for Chris in his searching for a self-identity. The scene's message is that he may lose his humanness while pursuing a place in an aristocratic circle. The idea of the bust or the portrait could also be seen as a reification of an identity. Indeed, Chris seems to seek his identity in the world of material goods and commodities that signify success and status. They, however, do not display his spiritual demands. Interestingly, the juxtaposition of a human with a statue takes place in the myth of Narcissus. The youth, "no more moving/Than any marble statue," (419-420) is charmed by his own reflection which he thinks is another boy. In both stories, the comparison of the human to the statue signifies the problem of self-identification.

Although an outsider among aristocrats, Chris keeps listening to the aristocratic opera music. I propose that opera music sounds in Chris's head due to its function of mythologizing the high society reality. On the one hand, opera is an artistic representation of reality, which substitutes for and, to some extent, idealizes life. It is easier for Chris to identify himself with an opera aristocratic character than with a real aristocrat. In the former case it is enough to attend the opera house or to listen to the

opera on disc (both ways are employed by Chris). In real life, the place in the aristocratic circle should be deserved, or bought. The price, however, can be higher than that of the theatre ticket. The price Chris will pay for being a part of aristocracy includes an unloved wife and murdering of his loved mistress. On the other hand, opera is a theatrical performance. Therefore, Chris's self-identification with opera characters allows him to perform his life itself as an actor. These performance skills are very helpful when he pretends to be a loving husband, a hard-working financier, and an innocent suspect.

It is not a coincidence that Chris is listening to the passion and tragedy operas (*La Traviata*, *Otello*). This allows him to perform a tragic sense of life. When he kills Nola, he acts as an opera character without being engaged in the situation as a living person. I argue that it is for this purpose the murder scene is accompanied by opera music, specifically by Verdi's *Otello*. While projecting himself as a tragic hero suffering because of passion (as most opera characters do), Chris may feel alienated from real life tragedy. This allows him to endure this emotionally hard situation. In his article on use of opera in *Match Point*, the composer and critic Goyios proposes that opera offers Chris "a subjective fantasmatic surrogate for [the unbearable reality]." The critic discusses Chris as an introvert who uses familiar operatic schemes of behavior as a defense against the outer world. This world is potentially and inherently traumatic for the introvert. Eventually, his consciousness during the murder is not mentally and emotionally engaged with the real act of committing the crime. Instead, he performs a murder within the operatic reality, and, therefore, it does not hurt him as it would hurt other humans.

In the estate sequence I have been analyzing, Chris is standing in the living room and listening to the opera music in his head. When he leaves the room, nondiegetic opera

accompaniment is interrupted by a diegetic sound of Ping-Pong. The classical soundtrack is completely deafened with the new sound when Chris enters a tiny room with table tennis equipment. This is another setting for his self-identity. The fact that the sound of table tennis in reality supersedes the opera sound in Chris's head suggests that the new setting may represent his real life identity. His true identity of a poor tennis player and outsider from high society contrasts with his mythologized image of aristocracy. In this room, Chris meets Nola and immediately falls in love with her. He stands for a while until the man she is playing with is gone. He gazes at her and looks far more confident than in the previous scene in the wealthy room. He is not scared to enter the room and accept the rules of the game ("for a thousand pounds a game"). On the contrary, he would like to risk losing money so that he could play with an attractive girl ("What did I walk into?"). He is playing with passion and makes Nola disappointed in her own skills. Chris stands very close to her in order to teach Nola how to play tennis. With one hand he embraces Nola, with another he helps her to hold a racket. This mise-en-scène creates an impression that the two have merged into one player. The visual narrative suggests that Nola embodies Chris's identity. What is significant is that Chris visually merges with his identity in the context of sexual interest in the object of his identification. The sexual implication of the scene is highlighted by their flirtatious dialogue, Chris's constant gaze at Nola, her seductive appearance and behavior, including her scoop neckline, velvet voice, and smoking.

Interestingly, this scene represents Chris as a person who is highly interested in people's identity. He identifies both Nola and other people in the house with the question: "what's a beautiful, young, American Ping-Pong player doing mingling amongst the

British upper class?" I propose that this question may express Chris's own doubt about his place among high society. This also resonates with Chloe's identification of Chris as "a poor boy from Ireland come to London." A few moments later, Tom, Nola's aristocratic boyfriend and Chloe's brother, identifies Nola as "a struggling actress." This, in turn, resonates with Chris's self-identification as a struggling tennis player. Furthermore, as an opera lover with developed performance skills, Chris is an actor himself. Therefore, he can only perform an aristocratic life. In such a way, both Nola and Chris are labeled by "the British upper class" as outsiders. Both characters' professions are unaccepted in the aristocratic circle. Tom's mother does not let her son marry an unsuccessful American actress. Chloe and her father encourage Chris to work as a financier, whom they consider to be a more suitable profession for an aristocratic husband than a tennis coach. At the same time both Nola and Chris try to marry into a wealthy family. The similarity between Nola and Chris are also observed by such critics as Cooper and Fuller. According to Cooper, both characters are "outsiders and climbers" (24). Fuller calls them even more harshly as "plebeian arrivistes" (17).

Along with their non-British nationality, unsuccessful ("struggling") careers, and professions unaccepted in the aristocratic circle, both Nola and Chris have a similar stature and appearance. This is revealed through cross-cutting of their close-ups. As Cooper observes, "full lips and intense blue-eyed gaze" of Rhys Meyers's Chris make him a look-alike with Johansson's Nola (25). Therefore, Chris's question: "Did anyone ever tell you you've very sensual lips?" sounds quite ironic. Chris pronounces this question with equally sensual lips as though he depicts his own reflection, which refers again to the Narcissus story. Narcissus's double is his reflection in the pool, which the

character mistakes for another handsome youth. Similar to Chris, Narcissus falls in love with his double, tries to embrace and kiss him. Remarkably, the editing of the corresponding scene in *Match Point* creates an impression of Chris's looking in the mirror. The shot of Chris's gaze in Nola's eyes breaks into the shot of her doing the same. Chris's remark about Nola's lips serves as a metonymy of Chris's desire to kiss her. His gesture and words evidence his wish to possess her. A similar desire characterizes Narcissus in relation to his reflection.

Interestingly, in the first and last scenes of this sequence Chris is presented as a tennis teacher. He teaches both Chloe and Nola court and table tennis respectively. However, the mise-en-scène of the teacher and his disciple after their game is different in each scene. Chris and Chloe drink lemonade facing each other. Chloe makes him an offer and he accepts it. In contrast, in the table tennis room, Chris touches Nola at the first opportunity and pursues her sexually. He almost merges with her as with his lost and recovered half. In such a way, the mise-en-scène demonstrates that Chris has a mercenary interest in Chloe and a romantic and sexual interest in Nola. Paradoxically, big tennis which he has abandoned is associated with Chloe and wealth, while table tennis with Nola and passion. Since Chris was not very successful in big tennis, this parallel may suggest that he will not be successful in his wealthy life as well. However, Chris advances in his financial career very rapidly, facing problems only in his personal life.

Analysis of this sequence shows that Chris is searching for his true identity. Nola as Chris's double embodies his identity. Despite their similarities, she is the only person who makes him enjoy life. It is explicitly underlined in the film that the new aristocratic environment, on the contrary, makes Chris feel claustrophobic. As Fuller observes, it

seems odd since most of this environment (Chris's office and penthouse) have plenty of space. Fuller further proposes that "he [Chris] only experiences freedom, at least at first, in Nola's cramped, cluttered flat, their love-nest" (16). This claim is proved by the analysis of the camera movement in Nola's apartment scene. The camera pans from snow falling outside to Chris tenderly massaging Nola and back to the snow. As Fuller concludes, with help of this camera movement the creators of this scene "grant the benighted couple a brief idyll" (16). Indeed, their romance looks idyllic at first, which is due to the fact that they match each other.

I interpret Chris's desire to possess Nola in terms of his desire to merge with his own identity. However, Chris cannot accept his own identity (and probably never recognizes it). Therefore, he refuses to marry Nola in order not to be identified with a poor outsider. In this sense, Chris's story is a parallel to the myth of Narcissus. Chris is sexually attracted by his double and pursues her. Similarly, Narcissus has a sexual interest in his reflection and tries to possess it. Both Chris and Narcissus struggle with self-identification. The comparison of the two stories reveals its common theme, mainly, the problem of self-identification. Although the myth of Narcissus is well known as a story of a selfish love (due to psychoanalysis, specifically, Freud's theory of narcissism), I am going to demonstrate that the myth may be interpreted as a story featuring one's searching for self-identity. This problem is discovered to be central in both myth and film through their comparative study. In order to examine this theme in the myth, I will do a close reading of its most famous source, a poetic fable from Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*[5] My analysis reveals that Freudian reading, which seems apparent because of Freud's

[5] I use a translation of *Metamorphoses* by Rolfe Humphries.

authority, neglects the poem's underlying motif of one's struggle with self-identity. The study of how this theme is treated in the poem will shed life on the conflict in the film.

In the poem's book *The Story of Echo and Narcissus,* there are lines which attract the reader's attention by some sort of judgment regarding Narcissus's love story. This fragment describes the boy bending before the creek and hopelessly trying to embrace his reflection in the water:

> …Foolish boy,
> He wants himself; the loved becomes the lover,
> The seeker sought, the kindler burns. How often
> He tries to kiss the image in the water,
> Dips in his arms to embrace the boy he sees there,
> And finds the boy, himself, elusive always,
> Not knowing what he sees, but burning for it,
> The same delusion mocking his eyes and teasing.
> Why try to catch an always fleeing image,
> Poor credulous youngster? What you seek is nowhere,
> And if you turn away, you will take with you
> The boy you love. The vision is only shadow,
> Only reflection, lacking any substance.
> It comes with you, it stays with you, it goes
> Away with you, if you can go away. (425-436)

The opening phrase of this fragment addresses Narcissus as a "foolish boy." The reason for such a judgment is revealed in the following observation. The boy seems foolish to

the narrator since "he wants himself." This can be interpreted as if he has a desire for himself. I propose that the physical desire described by the narrative may symbolize Narcissus's psychological need for himself, his desire to possess his identity. It was common in classical mythology to externalize and materialize human feelings and desires.[6] If we read the poem metaphorically, we will discover that Narcissus is called foolish for being unable to embrace his personality. This seems to have been separated from him since he cannot recognize himself. His turning toward himself signifies his efforts to identify himself. The narrative juxtaposes the subject of desire with its object: "the loved becomes the lover, the seeker sought, the kindler burns." With the use of mirroring grammatical constructions, and without specifying who is described as an object and who as a subject, the poem's narrative demonstrates that the boy and his reflection are indistinguishable. And yet they are separated through doubling of the features which characterize both of them.

By using present tense to describe Narcissus's actions Ovid achieves the effect of the prolonged and seemingly endless process of Narcissus's yearning for his identity and helpless attempts to possess it. This impression is reinforced by such descriptive marks as "how often," "always," and "same," along with enumeration of verbs which refer to Narcissus's efforts to touch the boy, line by line. This enumeration and repetition of Narcissus's same actions and the narrator's comments on their sterility ("finds the boy, himself, elusive," "the same delusion mocking his eyes") takes major part of Narcissus's story. In such a way, his helpless attempts to possess himself become an essence of the poem. The narrator's reaction to the boy's suffering (which is in focus of the poem) expresses compassion: "poor credulous youngster." The narrative voice seems to belong

[6] For different approaches to interpretation of ancient myth, see Morford and Lenardon, chapter one.

to an emotional observer engaged with Narcissus's hardships in love. By questioning Narcissus's action, the narrator initiates a dialogue with him: "Why try to catch an always fleeing image . . . ?" The boy, however, does not react. Therefore, the narrator provides a response instead of the interlocutor: "What you seek is nowhere." In such a way, the narrator takes the role of Echo, whose interference into Narcissus's life frames his story. Indeed, despite her interest in him, Narcissus remains indifferent to her in the beginning of his story. Similar to the narrator, Echo exposes pity to Narcissus in the end of his story: "she was sorry for him now" (494). Based on these similarities, I propose that the narrator and Echo play the same role as a compassionate companion of Narcissus whose voice is, however, passed off. The narrative's compassion towards Narcissus and concern for his hopeless attempt to embrace his identity reveal the signification of the opening judgment. The boy is called "foolish" not because of the narrator's condemnation or irony regarding the Narcissus's egoistical love and lust, but through pity towards his inability for self-identification.

While "accompanying" Narcissus during his falling in love, the narrator uses Echo's "approach" of echoing reality in order to once again emphasize the doubling nature of Narcissus' reflection: "and if you turn away, you will take with you the boy you love." This parallel grammatical construction makes two doubling points about the agent of action ("you"-"boy") and the action itself ("turn away"-"take with"). The enumeration of the same action of the two with similar structure reinforces this doubling effect: "it comes with you, it stays with you." The grammar's doubling in the end of the fragment makes the interconnection between the two even more explicit: "it goes away with you, if you can go away." Furthermore, the narrative voice echoes itself repeating its earlier

observation of the problem ("the loved becomes the lover") with concretizing its essence: "The vision is only shadow." In such a way, the close reading of the poem has proved that the Narcissus story along with Freudian narcissism has another significant dimension, mainly, the problem of finding and embracing one's identity. The narrative voice seems to reveal that Narcissus mistakes the desirable for the real and can hardly accept his identity. The new perspective of the poem is discovered by help of the film analysis. At the same time, it may enrich the film's interpretation.

Interestingly, in *Match Point,* too, the audience can hear the narrative voice concerned with the sad story of Chris's Narcissus. The role of his compassionate but neglected companion is played by the aria "Una Furtiva Lagrima," which importunately sounds four times in the film and thus dominates its soundtrack. This aria was mentioned by such critics of the film as Goyios and Fuller. However, they do not discuss its major implication. This is a famous aria from Gaetano Donizetti's opera *L'Elisir d'Amore* (1832) sung by Enrico Caruso. Paradoxically, despite its comedian context (the plot of the opera makes it fit the conception of a romantic comedy genre[7]) and light inspiring lyrics (which exposes the male character's hope for mutual love), the aria sounds sadly and even tragically both in the opera and in the film. I could find no research on the "tragic" sense of this piece but dare to propose that such an effect is achieved due to the score itself written in a minor tonality. The observation of its organic sadness seemed to attract Allen's attention in selecting the background music for the film. Removed from its original but nonorganic comedian context and incorporated into the film's dramatic narrative (which deals with tragic events and, therefore, fits the piece better) the aria's tragic feel is manifested even more explicitly than on the stage. Due to this feature of the

[7] For the description of a genre of romantic comedy, see Johnson.

aria, the joy of love and life expressed by the film characters in the scenes accompanied by “Una Furtiva Lagrima” look bleak and doomed. Ironically, its lyrics celebrate life and give hope for love’s capability to overcome any difficulties. However, in the film the aria reflects on the impossibility of happiness in love and foreshadows the tragedy (murder).

Similar to Echo and the narrator in Ovid’s poem, the aria accompanies the Narcissus figure in the film. It sounds as an echo of his true identity which implies a modest life but happiness in love. It struggles, however, with an antagonist who, in turn, promises Chris a wealthy but insensate existence and appears to be stronger. The joyful lyrics of the aria bring hope for his choosing love and a relationship with Nola. However, its tragic score predicts the fatality of their passion and the impossibility of a happy life in harmony with his true identity. First, the aria is heard in the background of the film’s opening when Chris proposes his philosophy (“how great a part of life is dependent on luck”). His monologue is illustrated by the shot presenting the tennis ball flying back and forth across the netting. The aria as well as Chris’s voice constitutes a nondiegetic sound in this scene. In such a way, the aria appears to manifest the narrative voice that tries to initiate the dialogue with an inattentive interlocutor. The tragic sound of the aria allows the narrator to comment on the fatality of Chris’s prospects and express pity regarding his wrong self-identification (“I’d rather be lucky than good”). It is due to the fact that Chris considers the wealthy life he will get in terms of luck. Later in the film, we will see that his theory works when due to a lucky coincidence he is not arrested for murdering his mistress. Therefore, the narrative voice seems to dwell on the darkest dimensions of the concept of luck.

The second time we hear the aria is one of the most romantic moments in the film when Chris is searching for Nola in the gallery. This scene depicts Chris yearning to possess his identity similarly to Narcissus in the poem. The aria echoes his feeling towards her and at the same time foreshadows the tragedy of their romance. The tragic sense of the music is reinforced by the abstract painting titled as Ache which constructs the background for the tiny figure of Nola. Third, the echo of love sounds when Chris promises Nola to do "the right thing" (to kill her) when she asks him to leave his wife. The next shot depicts him suffering from insomnia. This is the moment of moral choice. The close-up of Chris rubbing his face with his hands evidences that he is tormented with doubts. The aria as a call of love and pity accompanied his making the decision signifies his inner struggle. Its sadness, however, again suggests that the hope of love is doomed in his case. Finally, the aria constitutes a background for the movie's ending scene and titles. Just before, we see the close-up of Chris, who looks unhappy standing alone near the window. The mise-en-scène separates him from the happiness available for the rest of the family. The aria accompanies Chris's reflection on his deeds and represents a lamenting echo of his past happiness lost due to his mistaken self-identification. The sad feelings expressed on Chris's face, when luck is on his side and his desired wealth is achieved, signify, however, that he regrets killing Nola. His relationship with her was the only thing which he had really dreamed about. Now, being lucky and wealthy, he feels lonely and sad. In such a way, the narrative voice with help of the opera piece, similar to Narcissus's invisible companion in the myth, expresses pity regarding the man's incapability to discover himself. Indeed, the aria signifies both Chris's happiness in his love with Nola and the tragedy of their love. It seems to be a voice which initiates a

dialogue with Chris, similar to the narrator and Echo in Ovid. However, this voice is neglected. This is one of the reasons for the sad feeling instilled by the aria in the film, which, in the original context, celebrates the joy of love.

My analysis of the aria as a narrative voice suggests an alternative to Struchebrukhov's reading of the film. Struchebrukhov considers *Match Point* to be a poor reception of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Her major argument is that Allen's narrative is "monologic" as opposed to the polyphonic novel by Dostoyevsky. She argues that, according to the polyphonic model developed by Mikhail Bakhtin,[8] the novel represents polyphony of independent voices (and opinions) while the film represents only the point of view of its protagonist. However, in order to support her argumentation, Struchebrukhov does not provide a cinematic analysis of the film. In contrast, my analysis demonstrates that the aria represents such a narrative voice which opposes Chris's views. This voice is concerned with Chris's fate and struggles to warn him about the misleading values of luck and wealth which problematize his self-identification. In such a way, this aria is one of the multiple cultural references made in the film that make it a classical polyphonic work. Struchebrukhov asserts that Chris "lacks any traces of humanity" (146) as well as "an internal conflict" (147). An analysis of the shot when he does not sleep because he is struggling with a hard decision shows that, on the contrary, he is making a moral choice. The final mise-en-scène shows his loneliness and reflection over his past, and, therefore, cannot be read as "brief post-murder anxiety" as Struchebrukhov observes (143). Indeed, Chris's humanness is personified in his double, Nola, the only character who makes him happy ("I don't know what I'd do if I couldn't see you"). Therefore, it is not easy for him to kill her. However, the act of murdering her

[8] For the original polyphonic conception and analysis of Dostoyevsky's novel, see Bakhtin.

signifies his rejection of his humanistic half. At the same time, his final look evidences that he regrets it. And this very feeling of regret visible on his close-up suggests that he has at least a few "traces of humanity."

Interestingly, the overall poem featuring the story of Echo and Narcissus seems to be structured through echoing its different parts. The reflection ("shadow") of the boy appears to be his echo. Therefore, it is depicted as an echo. Ironically, after rejecting the love of Echo who pursued him echoing his words, Narcissus fell in love with a phantom boy who visually echoes him. This structure of the myth where the punishment of a guilty person mirrors his crime was common in antiquity. Narcissus has often been seen as punished through falling in love with himself for his proud rejection of the love of others.[9] My analysis, however, shows a more deliberate parallel. Narcissus does not fall in love with himself but with another handsome youth who echoes him. This is his punishment which parallels his rejection of Echo's love. Echo (being cursed herself) is able only to repeat Narcissus's words which express his desires: "Come to me!" or "Let us get together." Remarkably, Narcissus exposes the same kind of desires towards his reflection in the water. In her reading of the poem, DiSalvo makes a similar observation: "Narcissus will fall in love with his reflection; now it is his reflection [Echo] which falls in love with him" (17). In such a way, Narcissus appears to reject his identity (personified by Echo) first and then aspiring after it (his reflection). This pattern fits the plot of *Match Point* as well. Its protagonist Chris rejects his identity of a poor outsider while leaving a tennis player's path. However, his falling in love with Nola (who is considered as an outsider of the same kind) embodies his desire for his true self. He is seeking her the same way Narcissus seeks the boy in the water. And just like in the myth, Chris's desire

[9] For the concept of Narcissus's punishment, see Morford and Lenardon 332.

to possess her seems to be his punishment (since it creates problems and makes him suffer). In such a way, the comparative study of the poem and the film demonstrates that they focus on the same problem (self-identification) and discuss it in a similar fashion. Without this comparative reading, the insights about Nola echoing and bothering Chris as an ironic punishment for his rejection of his true identity in the film would not be apparent.

There seems to be a contrast, though, between the myth and film because in the myth there is a moment of self-recognition while in the film the character does not identify himself. However, the narrative concern of the poem remains the same. Despite knowing his image now, Narcissus still suffers from his inability to possess himself:

> The truth at last. He is myself! I feel it,
> I know my image now. I burn with love
> Of my own self; I start the fire I suffer.
> . . . . . .
> My riches make me poor. If I could only
> Escape from my own body!
> . . . . . .
> I know
> I have not long to live, I shall die early,
> And death is not so terrible, since it takes
> My trouble from me; I am sorry only
> The boy I love must die: we die together.
> . . . . . .

> Where are you going? Stay: do not desert me,
> I love you so. I cannot touch you; let me
> Keep looking at you always, and in looking
> Nourish my wretched passion! (463-465, 467-468,
> 470-473, 477-479)

The echo-like style of the poem remains consistent even in the moment of the sudden change in the plot. The sentences in the beginning have a mirroring structure in order to once again emphasize Narcissus's doubling: "he… myself," "I…my image," "I…my own self," "I…I." Although aware of a reflection being himself, Narcissus still divides them. His desire to "escape from [his] own body" proves that he does not accept his identity. His self-recognition does not ease his suffering but prolongs them: "my riches make me poor." His being "poor" may also refer to his inability to embrace his identity ("riches"). Interestingly, this phrase may perfectly illustrate the psychological state of the *Match Point*'s Narcissus, Chris, in the final episode of the film. Looking in the window from the height of his new social status with his dispirited eyes, he probably sees his career achievements (which made him rich) in the light of his lost and unrecoverable happiness. Standing apart from his happy family, he may feel how poor he is now in spite of his riches.

Even having recognized himself, Narcissus keeps wishing he could possess the boy in the water: "I cannot touch you." While asking his reflection to stay with him, he wants to fix his identity. However, he cannot accept it as his indivisible part. All that is available to him is looking in the mirror in order to "nourish [his] wretched passion." This passion towards the inaccessible identity seems to excite him more than the

completion of self-identification. Similarly to Narcissus's reflection, the film's character Nola, as an embodiment of Chris's identity, with her charm and beauty makes him "burn with love." Indeed, as Nola puts it, Chris is "so bored at home with her [Chloe] and … so crazy about me [Nola], which is all you [Chris] ever tell me." Chris himself admits that making love with Chloe is a mechanistic action which gives no pleasure. However, Chris refuses to identify himself with Nola. When Chris shares his problematic love towards Nola with his friend, Chris complains that she cannot give him wealth and status as Chloe does: "I can see no real future with this other woman [Nola]. And I have a very comfortable life with my wife [Chloe]." Similar to Narcissus, Chris prefers to gaze at Nola rather than share his life with her. Indeed, whenever Chris sees Nola before she gets pregnant, he can hardly take his eyes off her. However, he is not ready to have a family with her. In one of their bed scenes, Chris admits that she is very beautiful but, unfortunately, he needs to leave. Eventually, Chris leaves Nola by killing her. Narcissus prefers to die ("death is not so terrible"), regretting only the mutual death of his love ("the boy I love must die"). Similarly, when Chris kills Nola, this murder deprives himself of life he enjoyed with her.

As we saw, the moment of Narcissus's self-recognition does not interrupt the consistency of the echo-like narrative of the poem. The narrator seems still concerned with Narcissus's inability to embrace his identity, to merge with it. The recognition moment, however, strengthens Narcissus's suffering. The very fact of the boy in the pool being himself denies any possibility "to touch" him. Paradoxically, the presentation of Narcissus's identity signifies their separation and the impossiblity of their merging. At the same time, the incorporation of the self-recognition moment in the end of the story

allows the narrative to echo its opening. Liriope, Narcissus's mother, asked Tiresias whether her son would live to "a ripe old age" (347). The prophet's famous response was "Yes, if he never knows himself" (348). There would have been, of course, no myth of Narcissus if this prophecy had not come true. Indeed, when Narcissus discovers himself in the phantom boy, he "shall die early," according to his own claim. What strikes me in this prophecy is that it repeats in Allen's film with the same foreshadowing effect. When Chris calms down Nola with alcoholic drinks in the café after her failure at the audition and they are flirting before their actual romance, Nola makes an interesting remark:

Nola

You're gonna do very well for yourself, unless you

blow it.

Chris

And how am I going to blow it?

Nola

By making a pass at me.

In this conversation, Nola warns Chris to stop courting her if he wants to pursue his career goal promised by his relations with Chloe's family. Metaphorically, her warning can be read the same way as Tiresias's. It may suggest that Chris, similar to Narcissus, will achieve prosperity ("a ripe old age") if he does not struggle with self-identification ("never knows himself"). Indeed, Chris's falling in love with Nola (who is his female copy) creates a barrier on his way to a prosperous wealthy life. The only way of overcoming appears to be her murdering. This murder is also a metaphoric death of his old tennis teacher character, who was a poor but free and independent person, and could

take any path in his life. Indeed, in order to take a place in the high society circle, Chris sacrifices his freedom which allowed him, for example, to choose a woman to make love with who really attracted him. Now, for the sake of the preservation of his status, he has to leave Nola and continue his boring sexual life with Chloe.

The analysis of Allen's *Match Point* in close connection with the Narcissus myth reveals the problem of self-identification as one of the film's major themes. The protagonist of the film struggles to identify himself. Despite infatuation for the woman who represents his double and embodies his identity, he is unable to recognize his true self. By describing Chris's life in the upper class environment as claustrophobic, mechanistic, and boring the narrative and visual structure reveals that it is not an organic place for Chris's soul. The aria "Una Furtiva Lagrima" that accompanies Chris's reflections over his life represents a narrative voice concerned with Chris's struggle of self-identification. The tragic implication of the aria suggests that Chris's striving for success and wealth mislead him on his way to his authentic self. He seems to be blinded with these mainstream values that deprive him of clear vision. Just like Narcissus, Chris lives in the world of shadows, mixing worlds of the opera and high society. Indeed, Chris seems to feel freedom only in the arms of his lover, Nola. The film director seems to oppose values of love and harmony to those of wealth and success which, according to the film, dominate in contemporary Western culture.

The genre of a popular film (with the participation of such celebrities as Scarlett Johansson and Jonathan Rhys Meyers) responds to the director's concern over the popularized values of mainstream culture. Indeed, films are a major source of ideas which constitute this culture. In such a way, through the very medium of his work Woody

Allen reflects on the problem of self-identification. On the other hand, the film is a medium which allows its author to access a larger audience than any other form of art nowadays. In such a way, the genre of *Match Point* works both as a complement to its content (self-identification and mainstream culture) and a perfect tool to convey its message (mainstream culture misleads). Although there are no direct references in the film to the myth of Narcissus, it is explicit from my film analysis that its protagonist represents a contemporary Narcissus. He is as proud, asocial, and passionate (to his own reflection) as the mythological character. Furthermore, they both struggle to recognize themselves. *Metamorphoses* considers Narcissus's wish to preserve his beauty as a reason for his problem. Narcissus does not allow his suitors to touch him and, therefore, is punished with a fatal passion for himself. Considering that exterior beauty was one of the dominant values in classical society, this myth written in the genre of epic poem may also refer to its own cultural stereotypes.

In this context, Woody Allen's movie raises much deeper questions than that of crime and punishment. These questions are: How do we identify ourselves in a modern world and what price must be paid for such self-identification? What could one sacrifice to achieve his/her dream? Eventually how could we find our identity and know for sure that we find the right one? What does it really mean to be successful in a contemporary world?

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CHAPTER 4

ORESTES' EVENTUAL DEFEAT IN *CASSANDRA'S DREAM*

The most recent drama by Woody Allen, 2007 *Cassandra's Dream*, similar to *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, and *Match Point*, features murder as a possible way to resolve people's problems. However, unlike other two dramas, *Cassandra's Dream* ends up with death of its murderers being punished by their conscience. Allen's choice of thematic issues and the way he develops the plot of this film are similar to those in the cycle of Greek myths known as the Mycenaean Saga. The Saga includes myths of the house of Atreus.[10] The contemporary audience is familiar with this saga due to ancient Greek tragedies such as *The Oresteia* (5 c. BCE) by Aeschylus and *Orestes* (5 c. BCE) by Euripides, which I compare to *Cassandra's Dream* in this chapter. However, Allen does not copy ancient authors. Instead, he uses classical Greek mythology in order to reflect upon problems of contemporary Western culture. In this dialogue with antiquity, the film contrasts individual conscience in our contemporary world (as the only sure source of morality and punishment) with the social norms of the ancient Greek culture that enforced a code of action and revenge upon its heroes.

Only a little scholarly attention has been given to the classical themes in Woody Allen's dramas, which includes the profound work by Spanish scholar Gilabert Barbera. Since he wrote his essay before the release of *Cassandra's Dream*, Barbera mentions this

[10] For more information on the Mycenaean Saga see Morford and Lenardon, 439-470.

film only once in a footnote. However, he comments that this film "… is not a contribution on Greek tragedy but on its tradition in a very general sense" (2). In contrast to Barbera's reaction to the film, I will try to prove in this chapter that *Cassandra's Dream* is an excellent example of cinematic reception of classical mythology. First, the plot of the film alludes to the myth of Orestes recorded in Aeschylus's *The Oresteia*. Second, the film develops the ancient myth in modern reality. My analysis shows *Cassandra's Dream* as a contemporary meditation on Greek tragedy since it explores the problems raised in antiquity and establishes new perspectives that also perpetuate the ancient tradition.

There are a many similarities between *Cassandra's Dream* and the myths of the Mycenaean Saga. The title of the film refers to the story of the mythological character Cassandra. The film explores the same themes as the Greek tragedies: crime and punishment, ethical dilemmas, and justification of a crime. The behavior of the film's protagonists is reminiscent of the mythological characters, Orestes and Electra. Dramatic tension in both ancient and modern stories emerges from the protagonists' resistance to the demands of the mainstream culture, such as an amoral action (murder) for the sake of money and status.

In spite of similarities with ancient drama, the modern tragedy suggests different answers to the questions discussed in antiquity. Contemporary characters are motivated to commit a crime not because of revenge, as in antiquity, but for money. Some of them can get away with the crime, while others suffer from pangs of conscience. Unlike the ancient characters, the movie's killers are not justified but are punished by their conscience.

I will examine Allen's reception of classical myth as a dialogue between antiquity

and modernity. As a theoretical framework, I will use the approach to cultural studies elaborated by Russian culture expert, Vladimir Bibler. According to Bibler, no work of art can be comprehended profoundly without reflection on its connection with other ones. Ancient and modern works of art, in particular, carry on a constant dialogue. Through this interaction ancient culture is revealed as the foundation of the modern one and adds to it meaning. The modern culture, in turn, constantly reconsiders the ancient problems and claims. Following Bibler's theory, I will focus on the classical themes discussed in the film, their ancient and modern understanding. This chapter will be structured according to the main topics of the dialogue between antiquity and modernity in *Cassandra's Dream*: crime and punishment, motivation of a murderer, ethical dilemma, resistance to mainstream culture, conscience and responsibility and justification of crime.

In order to explore the main conflict of both ancient and modern dramas, I will also use the theory of mimetic desire elaborated by French literary and cultural theorist Rene Girard. In this context, I will demonstrate that the dramatic conflict in Woody Allen's film is created through the protagonists' resistance to follow the behavior scheme which seems required in order to possess the valuable commodities and status promoted by the mainstream culture. By mainstream culture I mean the culture that is mostly based on commercial media, art, and industries, which contributes to popularization of certain values. Allen's film meditates on such mainstream values as wealth and status, which drive its protagonists to commit the murder. According to Girard, people tend to mime (copy) desires of others; the problem occurs when people, consciously or unconsciously, resist accomplishing certain demands of circumstances in order to satisfy these desires. In works of art, such a resistance may be externalized in the delay with which characters

indulge their desires if they refuse to pay their price. This delay creates dramatic tension which is climactically resolved when the characters eventually do what they delayed. For example, Hamlet's resistance to revenge his father's murder is expressed in the form of delay to fulfill a desired revenge. On the one hand, Hamlet is driven by the desire to revenge. On the other hand, this desire requires him to murder his father's murderer. Girard emphasizes the play's conflict: if Hamlet becomes a murderer, he will join the circle of his enemies. The character refuses to act equally to his father's murderers and, therefore, delays. However, eventually, his desire for revenge appears to be too strong not to satisfy it, and, as a result, he murders.[11] In this chapter, I show that the film protagonists, Ian and Terry, are driven by a desire to possess money and status. However, this requires them to be criminals. Similar to Hamlet and Orestes, the brothers delay the murder. Later, when Ian finds himself captured in the circle of evil and the circumstances require him to murder his brother in order to keep his possessions, Ian delays again. In this sense, the tension in the myth of Orestes and the film is created in the same fashion.

A cinematic tale of contemporary Atrides contains several references to classical mythology, including one in the film's title. According to the review of *Cassandra's Dream* published in the film magazine *Sight & Sound*, "Allen's title appears to be as aimless as his script" (Mullen 49). The reviewer characterizes Cassandra as the prophet whose words nobody believes; Mullen presents this information as a fact everyone knows. In her opinion, however, there are no references to Cassandra's story in the film. Mullen does acknowledge that the title of the film coincides with the name of the boat bought by the film's protagonists. One of them, Terry, gives their boat the name of the

[11] For Girard's theory exemplified by the dramatic conflict in *Hamlet*, see Girard 271-289.

dog that brings him money at the dog track. Summing up these facts, the reviewer cannot find any connection with Cassandra's Greek myth; in Mullen's opinion, the film's title makes no sense. However, a more careful examination of classical mythology helps to reveal the title's meaning.

Although the sad myth of the ancient Greek prophetess is not directly discussed in the film, the drama's conflict and plot refer to her story. In Greek mythology, Cassandra is famous for warning people about future tragic events in vain. For example, she predicts the defeat of Troy, her native land, as a result of the Trojan War. She warns the Trojans about the trap prepared by the Greeks, but no one listens to her. Her tragedy is not only that nobody believes her but her inability to save her country, even though she possesses the gift of prophecy. This is her punishment from the god Apollo for a refusing to be his lover.[12]

Cassandra tells about her relationship with Apollo in the first part of Aeschylus's trilogy, *The Oresteia*. She is one of the main characters of the play *Agamemnon*. Cassandra is captured and brought to Greece by Agamemnon when he returns home after the Trojan War. Cassandra predicts both her murder and that of her master, Agamemnon, by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus. Since no one believes her, Cassandra cannot prevent their deaths. By referencing Cassandra's iconic role, the title of the film suggests that some predictable tragic events will happen to the film's characters. These foreshadowings will not be believed, though they will lead to the tragic end.

Just as Cassandra's predictions create suspense in the Greek tragedy, Woody Allen does the same from the very beginning of the film. The soundtrack plays the major role in this process. The tragic tone is already set in the film's opening titles and in the

[12] For myths connected with Cassandra, see Morford and Lenardon 256, 443-446,479, 512-513.

first scene due to the ominous musical score written by Philip Glass especially for the film (Lucia 40-43). The film's two main characters, the brothers Ian and Terry, are running in the harbor surrounded by boats and port facilities, accompanied by the dramatic score that seems to suspend them in space and air. However, the purpose of their run is in no way sinister: they just want to see the boat and meet its seller. But the music keeps foreshadowing tragedy in scenes that are both domestic and friendly. For example, the darkness and grief of the soundtrack unconventionally backgrounds the romantic scene, set in the pastoral countryside, in which Ian meets his future girlfriend and love, Angela. The director uses the modernist method, open texture (mixture of different modes), in order to make the audience aware that even the innocent surface of daily routine can hide the potential of dark and evil.

Most of the film's narrative is spent on dialogues – discussion and preparation for the murder, which strengthens the suspense achieved through the music. Indeed, the film's protagonists, Ian and Terry, because of their lack of finance to solve their personal problems, spend a long time debating the offer of their uncle Howard. He will pay them a huge amount of money if they kill his ex-colleague, Martin Burns. The brothers are shocked because they have never thought of such a way of earning money. Interestingly, Uncle Howard's making an offer is synchronized with thunder. It creates an effect of the natural force's interaction and warning of the brothers against a possible mistake. Nature, similarly to Cassandra, warns the brothers in vain: they will accept the offer. When Uncle Howard is going to talk about his case, it starts raining and the mise-en-scène is changed: the brothers and Uncle Howard move from the open place to the trees. The camera follows the characters, panning them from the back. It looks like someone is watching

them and, therefore, the camera work adds tension to this scene. Ironically, nature complicates the matter (it is raining) and at the same time allows the characters to continue their conversation (it gives them a shelter). This shelter, however, looks dangerous. The faces of the three are hardly seen beyond the trees' branches. There is almost no space and light in this place; the characters are surrounded by trees and their movement is limited by the rain. Therefore, the mise-en-scène looks claustrophobic. The characters' walking towards the trees' shelter symbolizes their transition from the innocent life (under the clear sky) to the criminal one (hidden under the trees in the rain). Along with dramatic change in the brothers' life, their perception of Uncle Howard changes. Having been idealized and praised by the brothers and his mother, Howard is now revealed as a criminal. When the three discuss the murder, they are shot from behind the tree. This emphasizes their conspiracy. The camera moves around the characters' circle, as if someone is keeping an eye on them, moving from one to another. This scene suggests that something has now gone wrong in the brothers' life; it will never be as simple, naïve and ordinary as before.

The brothers' long discussion of their uncle's offer and their expressed doubts show how difficult this decision is for them. Both have a strong feeling that the murder is not the right way to solve their problems. However, the brothers approach the issue differently, which sets up an opposition between the two that will lead to their future conflict. First, they both reject the uncle's offer. Terry refuses to participate in this murder at once: "I don't want to kill anybody." Ian's response is not so radical: "… this is so much more than just a simple favor." However, his behavior suggests he will deliberately consider the offer. While Terry insists he will not murder for any reason, Ian

tries to analyze the situation from the uncle's perspective and even proposes a possible justification of his shocking offer. Nevertheless, both brothers agree, at first, that the murder is unacceptable:

Terry

To think we'd be capable of such a thing.

Ian

I agree. I mean, family is one thing, but there are limits.

Terry

You'd never consider anything like that, would you?

Ian

No. Would you?

Terry

Not me.

The brothers' dialogue shows that they are testing themselves as possible murderers. While Terry questions their capabilities to commit a murder, Ian examines boundaries he can transgress. On the one hand, his family bonds with Uncle Howard are significant and allow him to consider the offer ("family is one thing"). On the one hand, Terry admits that even a family is not worth murdering for; murder is a moral transgression he is not ready for ("there are limits"). Remarkably, the brothers need agreement on the matter between each another in order to confirm their position ("would you? No. Would you?

Not me"). In a similar fashion, in order to commit a murder, the brothers will need each other's agreement.

Despite their first rejection of the idea of murder, the two brothers, keep thinking and talking about their uncle's offer; they are desperate for money. During their discussion Terry constantly uses such words as "God" and "Jesus Christ," as though his conscience is addressing him in terms of Christian morality that prohibits murder. Terry is nervous, shakes and constantly smokes; he declares that the offer makes him sick. He has troubled sleep and is tortured by nightmares. Terry's conscience in the form of his language, bodily reactions, and nightmares warns him, but its voice is not clearly recognized. Ian convinces Terry to accept the offer and, finally, they commit the crime. The prophetic warning of impending tragedy sounded by the music is fulfilled, since after the crime Terry's life turns into hell. He can finally hear the voice of his conscience, but it is too late; and it makes him suffer. The wrong decision leads both brothers to death. In this way, the pattern of Greek tragedy where all ends in death, as predicted by Cassandra, fits the structure of this film well.

The title of the film, in particular, refers to the very dream of the prophetess, as shown in Aeschylus first play in *The Oresteia*. Her dream can be interpreted both as Cassandra's vision of the future events (as was demonstrated above) and her desire to have her death avenged. The latter interpretation follows from my close reading of *The Oresteia* and analysis of the function of the boat "Cassandra's Dream" in the film. In the ancient tragedy, before Cassandra and Agamemnon are murdered, the prophetess prays for a revenge on their killers:

I pray the Sun in heaven,

> On whom I look my last, that he may grant
> To him who shall come to avenge my master
> From those who hate me payment of the price
> For this dead slave-girl slain with so light a stroke.
> (1322-1326)

Cassandra addresses her prayer to the god Apollo ("the Sun") while predicting her close death ("my last"). She asks him to allow Agamemnon's son Orestes, who will attempt to revenge on his father's murder ("who shall come to avenge my master"), to fulfill his revenge ("may grant to him … payment of the price") and kill those who will murder Agamemnon and Cassandra herself ("this dead slave-girl"). Cassandra's desire for revenge, indeed, is realized a few years after the murders when Agamemnon's son, Orestes, kills his mother Clytemnestra and her lover, just as Cassandra predicts.

Therefore, Cassandra's dream can be interpreted as an inevitable retribution for the murder. This also happens to the film's protagonists. The boat frames the film's story. In the opening scene the boat foreshadows the tragic events of the story. It is purchased with the money Terry gets in a lucky gambling bet, but it is gambling that later bankrupts Terry and makes him agree to murder. Therefore, the boat with the eloquent name symbolically functions to warn the characters about the results of their wrong actions. In the end, the boat brings retribution to the brothers since it is the site of their tragic deaths—Terry first accidentally kills Ian, and then himself in grief and guilt, it seems. The actual killers of Martin Burns are punished; Cassandra's dream comes true. However, in contrast to the ancient Greek myth, the worst culprit still remains alive and prosperous: Uncle Howard, who ordered the murder in the modern drama.

By leaving at least one criminal unpunished, Woody Allen proposes that there are people who can get away with crimes. He underlines this idea in the interview he gave at the time of the release of *Cassandra's Dream*:

> I do feel that in everyday life people on a great spectrum get away with crime all the time… Most crimes go unsolved, and people commit murders and ruin other people and do the worst things in the world and, you know, there's no one to penalize you if you don't have a sense of conscience about it. There is an element in life of enormous injustice that we live with all the time. It's just an ugly-but-true fact of life. (Whyte 15)

Indeed, the killers in Allen's film are not punished by law. Uncle Howard feels only relief after solving his problem with killing. He is depicted as more confident in the scene where he meets and thanks his nephews for their help after the murder than in the offer scene where he proposed the crime. When he first talks to the brothers about their future victim, he shakes and slurs his words, while after the crime he looks quite happy. He represents that sort of person who, in Allen's opinion, can get away with crimes.

The ancient Greek tragedians were also concerned with this problem: no human should get away with crime. Oedipus is exiled from his kingdom and blinds himself after his crimes are revealed, though he did them unknowingly.[13] Clytemnestra is killed in revenge for her murder of Agamemnon.[14] Orestes is judged in an Athenian court, though

[13] For Oedipus's myth, see Sophocles.
[14] For Clytemnestra's story, see Aeschylus, "Agamemnon"/*The Oresteia*.

exonerated.[15] However, the film *Cassandra's Dream* meditates upon another sort of punishment – moral suffering after the criminal comes to the realization that his conscious committing of the murder was a wrong action.[16] The problem of getting away with the crime is discussed in Allen's contemporary drama in terms of individual morality, while the Greeks were more concerned with the problem of justice in the larger societal setting. The question asked by Woody Allen is whether people can be so ethically indifferent that they would feel all right after killing somebody. In contrast, the ancient dramas do not highlight the individual's ethical state; they question what crime can be justified by the society and court system and what cannot.

The different source of morality explored in the ancient and modern dramas is revealed through the comparison of its protagonists, in terms of motivation and ethical dilemma before the crime is committed, and in terms of feelings and types of punishment after the crime. Ian and Terry's behavior is reminiscent of Electra and Orestes respectfully. Persuasive and practical, Ian acts like Electra. In *The Oresteia* she is depicted as willing to kill her mother but unable to do it since she considers this a male action. Therefore, she expects her brother to help her. Electra urges Orestes without questioning the rightness of murdering their mother. Similar to Electra, Ian incites his brother to crime. After both brothers agree to reject the uncle's offer, Ian is the first to change his mind. His major role in their making the decision regarding Uncle Howard's offer is explicit in the sequence of shots after their uncle's proposition: the brothers' discussion of the offer, their agreement not to murder, Terry leaving Ian's place, Terry's

[15] For the judgment of Orestes, see Aeschylus , "Eumenides"/*The Oresteia*.
[16] Traditionally, the Greek hero is male. Similar to such ancient heroes-murderers as Oedipus and Orestes, the criminal protagonists in Woody Allen's central dramas (*Crimes and Misdemeanors, Match Point,* and *Cassandra's Dream*) are males.

troubled sleep, his weakening and phone call from Ian, Ian's telling Terry that "they should accommodate Uncle Howard," and then both going to Howard's apartment to discuss the details of the murder. This sequence presents Ian as the mediator who leads a doubting Terry toward the murder.

In spite of similar behavior, Ian and Electra are motivated to murder for different reasons. Electra desires to have her mother killed as revenge for her father Agamemnon's death, while Ian needs money to afford a new girlfriend, who is beautiful, though "a bit high maintenance." However, the underlying instigation for murder is the same in both cases – mainstream values and social demands. With the words of the Chorus in *Choephoroe*, the second play in *The Oresteia* trilogy, Aeschylus acknowledges that vendetta is a widely believed law of life in classical Athens:

Chorus

Ask him to grant that God or man shall come -

Electra

Shall come to judge them, or to execute?

Chorus

Yes, say quite plainly, to take life for life.

Electra

Is that a righteous prayer to ask of heaven?

Chorus

Why not? – to pray ill for your enemies. (118-122)

The Chorus convinces Electra that her desire for revenge is normal. Electra's accepting this norm signifies that she has shared the common belief and desire for revenge for the

death of a family member ("take life for life") that was prevalent in Aeschylus' day. Ian is also portrayed as sharing mainstream beliefs in current Western society about the value of money, the attraction of a wealthy lifestyle, the desire for a fashionable and prosperous business (hotels in California), as well as an attractive girlfriend and elite acquaintances. As film critic Cynthia Lucia notes, vintage and high-end cars borrowed by Ian from Terry's repair shop "confer meager status" and allow Ian to "impersonate the man he'd like to be – powerful, rich, refined" (40). Indeed, Ian constantly tries to meet the demands of the mainstream culture.

Along with expensive cars that belong to someone else, Ian is attracted by the sexy woman who is also desired and sexually possessed by other men. Surprisingly, even the boat, the power broker of the narrative, is compared by Ian to the boat owned by Uncle Howard. Howard himself is the personification of Ian's ideal of success, which Ian tries to attain. That is why Ian imitates Howard even when Ian realizes that Howard-like wealth can be achieved only through criminal activity. Ian resists copying Howard only in the last minutes of his life when he is confronted with actually killing his brother Terry, whom Howard has marked as too dangerous for their own survival. Ian's behavior is an excellent illustration of the theory of mimetic desire put forth by Rene Girard. Indeed, Ian copies those, who like Uncle Howard, aspire to possess and keep wealth and status and are ready to pay for it. Ian aspires to be as rich and powerful as his uncle. At the same time, Ian is ready to become a murderer in order to satisfy his desires. However, family bonds make Ian delay in murdering his brother. Eventually, Ian's inability to kill Terry brings them into a fight and ends up with the deaths of both.

The same sort of delay takes place in both Terry's and Orestes's cases, thus enabling the audience to compare the two characters. Both of these men doubt whether they should kill and feel scared after they commit the crime. Terry constantly questions if the murder is a right decision, and most of the narrative is spent on his and Ian's discussion of the crime. The brothers are even given a possibility of changing their minds when their first attempt to kill their victim accidentally fails. Similarly, Orestes delays with the murder of his mother. He questions the necessity of such an action and has a conversation with his mother in order to justify himself and refresh his confidence. However, the protagonists' ethical dilemmas that, in fact, are responsible for the dramatic conflict and cathartic state of the audience are different in the two dramas.

If Terry doubts whether he should kill an unknown man or not, Orestes doubts if it is right to kill one's mother. Terry constantly asserts he can't be a killer ("You can't even say what it is we're talking about." "Oh, I can't do it, Ian. I can't." "This is wrong, Ian! It's just wrong."). Terry does not want to kill the lady accompanying Martin Burns during their first attempt at murder because she is a woman who just happens to come to his place: "I can't kill her just because she's here, Ian. It's wrong." Terry is so stressed before the crime that he even refuses his favorite meal and gets drunk. In contrast, Orestes is not scared to kill but considers the murder as his duty since the god Apollo orders him to do it.[17] Furthermore, since he is the only male offspring of Agamemnon, his society expects him to avenge his father's death. It is explicit from Electra's and the Chorus's dialogue provided above (*Choephoroe*/Aeschylus 118-122). The Chorus, which may represent society's voice, proposes that this is a norm when a man "takes life for

[17] According to *The Oresteia*, Apollo hears Cassandra's entreaty of revenge on her death and, therefore, commands Orestes to kill Clytemnestra, the murderer of Cassandra and Agamemnon.

life." Since Electra is not considered to be a proper agent of revenge, simply because of her gender, Orestes is the only one to do it.

In contrast to the film, Orestes's resistance to kill is not emphasized in Aeschylus's tragedy. Unlike Terry, Orestes does not have a nightmare before the crime. However, Orestes hears that his mother has had one with a snake drawing blood from her breast. He interprets this dream and claims that his mother has seen her own death by his hand. The dream does not worry him but whips him up to undertake the required action because the dream is seen as divinely inspired prophecy. On hearing about it, Orestes is not depicted as stressed but confident and ready to fulfill this dream:

> As I interpret it, it tallies well.
> Since, issuing from whence I saw the light,
> The serpent-child was wrapt in swaddling-clothes,
> And since it mouthed the breast that nourished me,
> With kindly milk mingling a curd of blood,
> Whereat she cried in terror, it must be
> That, even as she gave that monster life,
> So she must die a violent death, and I,
> The dragon of her dream, shall murder her. (540-
> 548)

Orestes's monologue illustrates the resolution of his character and at the same time attempts not to emphasize the amoral dimension of son's killing his mother. He admits that he is planning to deprive of life the one who gave him life ("it mouthed the breast that nourished me/With kindly milk mingling a curd of blood"). Interestingly, with the

use of synecdoche, the poem reduces Orestes's mother to her breast, while life and death are represented as milk and blood, as though it is not the human life which is at stake but abstract liquids. The synecdoche helps to represent Orestes's alienation from his mother's murder which, if called properly, may seem amoral. Indeed, although Orestes's speech expresses his readiness to fulfill his plan and kill Clytemnestra ("she must die," "I … shall murder her"), he does not directly discuss their kinship as that of human son – mother relationship ("she gave that monster life," "I,/The dragon of her dream"). The way Orestes organizes a murder supports this idea of alienation. He enters the palace as a stranger. First, he succeeds because he has been exiled from his country for several years and is hardly recognized. He even has to prove his identity to his sister-collaborator. The fact that he hides his identity can also be interpreted as his fear of being recognized as a son of his mother who he is going to kill.

Orestes kills Clytemnestra's lover, Aegisthus, without any delay or questioning. This murder is justified a priori since Aegisthus was Clytemnestra's collaborator in the murder of Agamemnon. Orestes's killing of Aegisthus is not even considered later during his trial at Athens. The only problem emerges when Orestes is going to kill his mother. When Clytemnestra addresses Orestes as her son, he is embarrassed for a moment and asks his friend what to do. This is the moment of the greatest suspense in the whole play. The audience is supposed to ask whether a son should kill his mother, even in these circumstances. Being confused as he reveals his identity, Orestes has to explain why he dares to go through with the deed. After forty lines of his conversation with his mother, his resolution is renewed and, finally, he kills her. Thus, the reason for and character of the delay are different in Terry's and Orestes's cases. Terry resists from the very

beginning up to the murder itself, while Orestes delays only once because his plan to stay disguised fails.

The comparison of the emotional state and behavior of Terry and Orestes after each commits his crime demonstrates that both feel stressed but their individual stress emerges from different sources. After the murder of Clytemnestra, Orestes is proud of ridding his country of tyranny. At the same time he is upset to have been required by Apollo to kill his mother. He is scared that he will go mad since he is pursued by the awful Furies, who are the goddesses of revenge sent by Clytemnestra's spirit. Symbolically these women can be interpreted as signs of his madness, or pangs of conscience. However, he is saved from their punishment in the end of the tragedy when he is acquitted of his crime by the Athenian jury, with the aid of Athena, who seems to justify his crime. There is no evidence that the freed Orestes is tortured by his conscience.

Orestes by Euripides presents another play based on the same myth, which includes the conversation between Orestes and his uncle, Menelaus. In this conversation Orestes talks about being destroyed by his awareness of having done terrible things, that is, murdering his mother (380-469). This other, later version could be evidence of the emerging voice of Orestes's conscience in Greek society. However, Vladimir Yarkho, Russian scholar of classical literature and culture, proves that Orestes is not tortured by pangs of conscience since he does not aspire to redeem himself from blame (251-263). On the contrary, Orestes quickly forgets his grief and searches for a way to escape retribution for such a sin. Yarkho examines the morality of several ancient Greek tragedies and comes to the conclusion that the classical hero is ashamed of and feels disgraced by those actions that can be known by other people. Indeed, there is no

evidence of Orestes's independent self-criticism. Both Aeschylus's and Euripides's Orestes figures are afraid of punishment by Apollo or the goddesses of revenge, but do not feel the pangs of their own conscience.

In contrast, the contemporary murderer, Terry, endures moral suffering and hears the voice of his conscience repeatedly. Instead of escaping punishment, he thinks of calling the police to get "the slate wiped clean." In other words, Terry seeks to get something of his conscience which tortures Terry and makes his life unbearable. He cannot forget the murder, drinks a lot of alcohol and takes drugs; he cannot sleep or be happy about those things he has always cherished. He is constantly stressed, regrets what he has done, vents his anger on his clients and loses his job. As David Denby notes, even Terry's appearance changes. This critic emphasizes the contribution of Colin Farrell's acting to the visual representation of Terry's suffering and self-criticism:

> Terry is a decent guy with many weaknesses, and,
> after the crime is committed, Farrell gives him a
> piteous self-loathing that is very touching. His eyes
> cast down, Farrell seems to get smaller and weaker
> – his body implodes. (87)

Indeed, after the crime Terry has a dismal look which calls for pitying. Terry is obsessed with the ghost of his crime and talks about it all the time; he becomes indifferent to anything else. Terry's paranoia and readiness to go to the police makes Ian worry. This leads to the death of both brothers during their final voyage on the boat. Terry is punished when he accidentally kills his brother, which leads to his own suicide without the possibility of paying for his sin as he has desired. In this way, Allen shows that besides

law there is another thing which penalizes murderers in our contemporary world - human conscience, which is powerful to a far greater extent than in the ancient world.

If all the film's characters had been able to get away with the crime, either morally or legally, the film's tragedy would not have been so apparent. However, there is at least one character in the film whose conscience is overtly manifest, and the narrative develops due to his doubts and regret. The very inability of Terry "to forget" makes Howard and Ian plan another murder, this time Terry's. Now Ian has the same ethical dilemma as Orestes since he has to kill his own family member. In contrast to the classical drama where the murderer is acquitted in court and a new order of justice is established, Allen shows that the circle of evil is unstoppable: in order to destroy the consequences of the murder one must murder again. Nevertheless, Ian is unable to kill his brother since "he's family." This episode demonstrates that Ian has a conscience too. As Barbera notes, Woody Allen's incursion into tragedy represents "the search for a centuries-old ethic and a clear counter-argument against ethical indifference" (2). This counter-argument is human conscience, the individual measure of morality, an unknown or undeveloped topic for ancient Greek authors.

In order to reflect on the limits of people's ethical indifference, Allen intentionally opposes the emotional state and behavior of the two brothers, as well as the uncle. This opposition is illustrated by the sequence of scenes that show how each character lives after the crime, with a focus on the brothers: Terry cannot sleep at night, he sits on the bed and recollects the murder, hearing the two shots; Ian and Angela talk about the murdered Martin Burns and her pretty clothes at the same time, as though they carry the same significance; Howard thanks the brothers for their help; Angela and Ian

meet her parents and have an idyllic walk in the city; Terry wakes up due to nightmares and extreme panic; Terry fights with his client; Ian smiles while talking on the phone and preparing for the online business conference. This sequence demonstrates how differently the two brothers regard the murder they committed: Terry cannot calm down, while Ian enters his new prosperous life with joy. In order to reinforce the emotional opposition of the two brothers, Terry's despair and Ian's happiness, Allen darkens Terry's scenes and provides more lightning (including the natural one) into Ian's scenes. Terry constantly squints his eyes, as though life after his crime is painful for him to see. In contrast, Ian is nervous only once, when Angela tells him the news about the murder of Martin Burns. Ian's emotional inconvenience is illustrated by his moving into another room with a heavy sigh. The rest of the time he feels all right and tries to cheer his brother up. But the limits of Ian's ethical indifference are revealed at the very end when he cannot kill his brother.

Problems of ethical indifference and conscience are not as directly discussed in Aeschylus's tragedy as it is in Allen's film. A comparison of ancient and modern dramas demonstrates different kinds of moral attitude in the various periods of Western culture. If the characters' actions in the classical world are driven by the gods' will and fate, then *Cassandra's Dream* claims that although people depend on circumstances, they act according to their own will and bear the whole responsibility for their actions. Indeed, Orestes acts according to Apollo's command, which justifies him in court. The classical hero, in fact, bears little responsibility for his actions. Gods direct, excuse, and punish him. In contrast, Terry and Ian penalize themselves. Although Terry felt forced to his

crime by financial problems, he finally realizes that all humans are actually free to make a decision:

Terry

We made the wrong decision.

Ian

The way I see it, we didn't have much choice.

Terry

You always have a choice, Ian.

This dialogue provides a direct discussion of who is responsible for one's actions in our contemporary world. Terry opens the conversation with a claim that suggests his repentance ("We made the wrong decision"). His concluding phrase shows that the experience he has had taught him that people and not the circumstances are responsible for their deeds ("You always have a choice"). In this way, Allen acknowledges that each of us bears the personal responsibility for our actions. The only moral compass we have is our conscience that warns us like Cassandra and calls for a right decision. And we should trust it in order to stay psychologically alive.

My analysis of Woody Allen's *Cassandra's Dream* as a dialogue between antiquity and modernity shows that the film proposes human conscience as the only source to orient people in the contemporary world. Listening to one's conscience, which is not centered in the ancient mythology, is the only way to resist the power of mainstream culture that popularizes such illusive values as money, success, and social status. Conscience is also the only instrument to penalize a criminal in the world with an imperfect legal system, where lots of people get away with their crimes (such as Uncle

Howard). Woody Allen demonstrates how the mainstream culture with its ethical indifference can turn ordinary and decent guys (Terry and Ian) into criminals ready to kill unknown people for the sake of money.

Knowledge of classical mythology enables the viewer to interpret the title of the film as an inevitable retribution for one's crimes and to reflect upon its main topics and dramatic conflict. Juxtaposition of the contemporary and ancient characters reveals the shift in the attitude to the source of responsibility for one's actions in the Western culture. If an ancient hero acts according to social demands, Gods' will, and fate, then the modern person wears the total responsibility for his actions and, therefore, always has a choice. The comparison of ancient and modern works of art demonstrates that the source of dramatic tension is similar - the character's delay in accomplishing a violent action forced by social circumstances and the seeming necessities of life. Allen's claim that everyone is always free to make a decision is a rare moral message in contemporary art, which can help orient the audience in a world pressed by the superficial values of the mainstream culture.

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